

Iraq to allow private banks

BAGHDAD (R) — The Iraqi government on Sunday adopted an amendment to its banking laws which would allow the establishment of privately-owned banks for the first time since 1965, the official Iraq News Agency INA reported. It quoted Information Minister Hamid Youssef Hummadi as saying after a cabinet meeting that the changes would permit private banks to operate under the supervision of the central bank. He gave no further details. Privately-owned banks last operated in Iraq in 1965, when the late President Abdul Salam Aref decreed a wave of nationalisations which covered banks and insurance firms. The move was said at the time to have been inspired by similar policies adopted in Egypt under the late Socialist President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Al Rafedain and Al Rasheed are Iraq's only banks at present.

IMF team in Jordan for talks

AMMAN (R) — A team from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has arrived in Jordan to discuss an economic adjustment programme thrown off track by the Gulf crisis, diplomats and government sources said Sunday. The delegation from the IMF's Middle East department is holding annual consultations with the finance minister and Central Bank officials, they said. The focus of the talks is on resuming the adjustment programme Jordan and the IMF approved in 1989. Jordan was unable to reach the IMF targets because trade with Iraq slumped and Gulf aid dried up after the Gulf crisis. The country needs the IMF to approve a new programme so that it can reschedule its foreign debt, which has risen to \$8 billion. It has stopped servicing most of the debt. Jordan wants the Paris Club of government creditors to write off some of the debts and the London Club of commercial creditors to restructure the amount they are owed. A new programme would include a cut in the budget deficit, measures to improve the balance of trade and of payments, and politically unpopular cuts in subsidies. Economist Fahed Faneek said the fund wants Amman to either cut spending or raise taxes to slash at least 60 million Jordanian dinars (\$91 million) from its budget deficit.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورْدَانْ تَايْمِزْ يَوْمِيَّةٌ سِيَاسِيَّةٌ تُنْصَرِّفُ بِاللُّغَةِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ وَالْأَنْجَلِيزِيَّةِ عَنِ الْمَوْسَسَةِ الْصحفِيَّةِ الْأُرْدُنِيَّةِ «الرأي»

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Bhutto's husband acquitted

KARACHI, Pakistan (R) — A Pakistani court on Sunday acquitted opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, of bank fraud, his lawyer said. But Zardari, who was arrested in October, was not released from jail because of a dozen other charges he faces, said lawyer Raja Qureshi. After the acquittal by a special court, activists of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) distributed sweets to well-wishers. "It is a morale-boosting victory for the PPP," said Sathish Ishaq, a local PPP leader.

Landslide kills 50 in S. Union

MOSCOW (AP) — A landslide buried eight houses and killed at least 50 people in a village in the Tien Shen mountains of Uzbekistan, Soviet media reported Sunday. Fearing more landslides, authorities evacuated 100 residents of the village after the disaster Saturday in Chigiristan, near the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, about 3,100 kilometres southeast of Moscow. The pile of earth covering the homes was so large that the government of the southern Soviet republic declared it a common grave and did not try to excavate the dead, the Interfax news agency said.

Honecker recovering

BONN (R) — Former East German Communist leader Erich Honecker, flown secretly to Moscow in March on the orders of the Kremlin, has had surgery for cancer and feels well, Germany's Bild newspaper reported on Sunday. The newspaper said its Moscow correspondent spoke briefly to Honecker, 79, as he took a stroll in the grounds of a military hospital accompanied by his wife Margot and a plainclothes KGB officer.

Iraq lifts restrictions on foreign journalists

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq on Sunday said it had lifted reporting restrictions imposed on visiting journalists during the Gulf war. An information ministry official said Western reporters in Baghdad would no longer have to submit their reports to ministry censors before transmitting them to their media organisations. "Censorship was adopted during the war for military reasons and for our own security. Because the war is over there is no longer the need for censorship," the official said. Visiting journalists would still need to be accompanied by information ministry guides on trips outside Baghdad "for their own protection" but were free to move independently within the capital, the official added.

Iran destroys rotten foodstuffs

NICOSIA (R) — The Iranian health ministry has started destroying rotten foodstuffs it says Western countries sent as relief aid for Iraqi refugees in Iran, the official news agency IRNA said on Sunday. Health officials in the western city of Saqqez on Saturday destroyed 4,300 tons of fish which had passed its expiry date. In the past week they also disposed of rotten canned food, IRNA said. It did not say which countries sent the food. Iran has specifically accused Germany of sending tinned wheat bran which smelled bad and was not usable. It says it will send back used blankets sent by the United States.

Syria announces drug seizure

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Syrian forces based in Lebanon, in coordination with Lebanese authorities, have confiscated 9,000 kilograms of marijuana, an official said Sunday. An interior ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the seizure took place in recent days and that the marijuana would be incinerated.

Jordan wants full Palestinian participation

King, PLO team discuss Middle East peace process

By Lami K. Andoni
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein held talks on Sunday with a senior Palestine Liberation Organisation delegation on recent efforts to revive the peace process in the Middle East.

King Hussein reaffirmed Jordan's firm position on Palestinian representation at the proposed peace conference, saying that the Palestinian side should participate in any such conference as sole legitimate party to discuss the Palestinian dimension in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Jordanian News Agency, Petra said.

Palestinian sources close to the meeting said that both sides agreed that any peace conference should be a serious negotiating forum and not simply a ceremonial meeting.

The Jordanian-Palestinian talks, which are said to be preparing the way for a visit by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to Amman, followed reports that Washington was promoting a process involving talks between a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and Israel.

PLO Executive Committee member Yasser Abed Rabbo told the Jordan Television on Saturday that the PLO insist on an

independent Palestinian representation "involving delegates from inside and outside the Israeli-occupied territories."

Other Palestinian officials said that the PLO would support either an independent delegation or a unified Arab negotiating team where the PLO would be represented on equal footing with the other parties.

The Palestinian sources said that Jordan has not pressed for any form of representation and is leaving it to the PLO to decide.

The King has repeatedly said that it was up to the Palestinian

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His Majesty King Hussein Sunday holds talks with PLO Executive Committee members Mahmoud Abbas and Yasser Abed Rabbo (Petra photo)

Bush hospitalised for 'irregular heartbeat'

BETHESDA, Maryland (AP) — President George Bush, still experiencing an irregular heartbeat Sunday after he fell ill while jogging, remained under observation at a military hospital, the White House announced.

Spokesman Martin Fitzwater said there was no sign of any heart damage or heart attack after the 66-year-old president suffered fatigue and shortness of breath while jogging Saturday at his Camp David retreat.

Bush was diagnosed as having an atrial fibrillation, irregular heartbeat, and flown by helicopter Saturday evening to Bethesda naval hospital located just outside Washington.

The White House had said Bush's release was expected early Sunday. But doctors kept Bush under observation.

Atrial fibrillation can occur for

a variety of reasons and does not necessarily represent a serious threat, according to medical specialists.

Fitzwater said Bush spent a comfortable night and awoke early Sunday. "The president is in great spirits, but still has atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat)," Fitzwater said in a written statement.

"The president has no other symptoms and feels completely normal. This is corroborated by the blood and X-ray tests which were examined this morning."

Fitzwater later said Bush's doctors would decide whether the president would remain another night in the hospital. He said they were not concerned that Bush's heartbeat remained irregular.

"Everyone thinks that the

(Continued on page 5)

Allied forces expand zone in N. Iraq

DOHUK, Iraq (AP) — U.S. army troops moved to within less than two kilometres of the provincial capital of Dohuk on Sunday, expelling hundreds of Iraqi soldiers along a highway in the southernmost push by allied forces in northern Iraq to date.

Taking the city of Dohuk would mark the most significant expansion of the allied security zone since the military forces moved into northern Iraq and began establishing "security zones" for returning Iraqi refugees on April 20.

Dohuk, a city of 380,000 about 50 kilometres south of the Turkish border as the crow flies, is the capital of the northwest sector of Iraq and one of the main communication hubs in the north. Until now, the allied troops have secured smaller cities.

GCC wants continued sanctions on Iraq, Iran's involvement in Middle East regional security

KUWAIT (Agencies) — Six Gulf Arab states called on Sunday for U.N. sanctions on Iraq to remain in force until it freed hundreds of detainees and returned Kuwaiti property it pillaged during its seven-month occupation of the emirate.

The official Kuwait News Agency KUNA said the foreign ministers of the six nations — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman — also wanted Iraq's weapons of mass-destruction destroyed before sanctions could be lifted.

Sanctions were imposed soon after Iraq occupied Kuwait in a lightning attack last Aug. 2. The six Gulf nations are member states of the Gulf Coopera-

tion Council (GCC). Their call came in a communique issued at the end of a one-day meeting in Kuwait and carried by KUNA.

The six GCC states are holding "intensive contacts" with Iran to involve it in regional security, the head of the GCC said Sunday.

Foreign ministers from the six council states held several hours of talks at Kuwait's Bayan palace to work on new security arrangements in the aftermath of the Gulf war.

Abdullah Bishara, secretary general of the council, said the foreign ministers did not discuss one sensitive issue: whether the United States and other western nations would be asked to keep ground troops in the region.

Bishara, a Kuwaiti, said no specific agreements were reached at Sunday's meeting.

"We agreed on guidelines and framework — we didn't agree on the number of soldiers," said Bishara.

He said there were "intensive contacts underway" with the Iranians to include them in regional security plans.

"Iran is a friend and neighbour and it has to play a role in the security of the region," said Qatar's foreign minister, Mubarak Ali Al Khater, the chairman of the meeting. "We will soon come out with a plan regarding this issue."

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Rafsanjani rules out ties with U.S., calls for democratic Iraq

NICOSIA (AP) — Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani said Sunday that the Islamic Republic was not interested in ties with the United States, and blamed Iraq's problems on its lack of democracy.

Rafsanjani, addressing a seminar at Tehran University, said Iran would stick to its Islamic principles in expanding its cultural, political and economic relations, reported Tehran Radio, monitored here.

"Iran is not thinking about establishing ties with the U.S. and the U.S. is always trying to make the issue of establishing ties with Iran subject to conditions," said Rafsanjani.

Washington broke ties after Iran held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days during the first years of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Financial disputes from the confrontation, as well as the 13 missing Westerners believed by the West to be held by Iranian-backed groups in Lebanon, have continued to block ties.

Rafsanjani, seeking financial and technical aid, has been working to improve Iran's external relations. He must battle Iranian radicals who believe a confrontational foreign policy is the cornerstone of the Islamic revolution.

On Iraq, Rafsanjani said Iraq could eliminate the need for special zones patrolled by foreign armies if it treated its people correctly by holding free elections that made citizens feel secure in their own country.

Without that, the zones are needed, the president said.

"The Iraqi government can turn Iraq into a secure environ-

ment for all the people of that country by holding free elections and by bringing about unity among Arabs, Kurds and others and then there would be no need for the establishment of a special zone with the presence of foreign forces," Rafsanjani said.

Iraq has said the zones violate its sovereignty and demanded the U.N. play the central role in running them.

The government-run newspaper Al Iraq on Sunday repeated the accusation that the camps were designed to prevent an autonomy accord being negotiated between the Baghdad government and Kurdish leaders.

Iraq also complained Saturday to the United Nations about Iran violating the 1988 ceasefire

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Egyptians pay last tribute to 'musician of the generations'

By Munir Boweti
Reuters

CAIRO — Mourning their idol, thousands of chanting Egyptians on Sunday thronged behind the open carriage drawn by six black horses that carried the coffin of Mohammad Abdul Wahab, the father of modern Arab music.

A huge press of grieving people, shouting "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great) and "La ilah illallah" (there is no God but Allah), broke through heavy police security to get closer to the coffin, draped in Egypt's red, white and black flag.

Politicians, ambassadors and celebrities moved in solemn procession to the mosque in north-eastern Nasr City district in tribute to the singer-composer whose popularity was unrivalled

throughout the Arab World.

The numbers of mourners apparently forced a change in arrangements for the funeral, held after the Muslim noon prayers. It was switched from Omar Makram mosque in central Cairo.

Abdul Wahab died on Saturday aged 90.

Egyptian papers on Sunday devoted pages to his life, and tributes from celebrities.

"He is Egypt's fourth pyramid," said writer Mustapha Amin.

"We are lucky to have lived at the same time as this legend," film star Faten Hamama said.

The legend was a prolific composer, a splendid voice with perfect diction, and hidden fears.

A hypochondriac, he is said to have refused to shake hands with

people and would not wash his hands with any soap that had been used even once.

Abdul Wahab never used planes, preferring instead to travel by sea on his rare trips abroad.

Around the Arab World on Sunday, radio stations continuously played some of the hundreds of romantic and patriotic songs he composed which took many singers to stardom.

Others carried old favourites from the "master" who ended a 30-year singing break only last year to record *Min Ghair Leh* (without why), which went straight to the top of the charts.

Prime Minister Atef Sedki and visiting Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Ben Yahya led the mourners in a solemn but short walk to the mosque.

Sharon snubs U.S., says settlements will continue

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon shrugged off a snub by Washington and vowed on Sunday to continue settling Jews in occupied Arab lands.

Supporters of Sharon organised a hero's welcome at Tel Aviv airport for the 63-year-old hardliner who was denied an official reception in Washington because his settlement campaign contravenes U.S. policy.

Interviewed by Israel Radio before leaving the United States, Sharon insisted: "There is no connection between peace and the matter of strengthening settlements."

Sharon said the Jewish state saw the settlements as vital to its security.

The Bush administration says the 100,000 Jews living among the 1.75 million Palestinians of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip hamper U.S. efforts to arrange talks on solving the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Israel's Peace Now Movement said on Sunday bulldozers had laid the foundations for another 2,000 housing units near the Kar-

nei Shomron settlement in the West Bank.

Sharon was invited to meet his U.S. counterpart, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Jack Kemp. But Secretary of State James Baker objected to an official meeting at Kemp's office and they met at the Israeli embassy.

Baker was angry at Sharon for announcing plans for further settlement just as he was trying, in a series of Middle East visits, to persuade Israel and Arab states to open peace talks.

Sharon has said settlement of the occupied lands, captured from Egypt and Jordan in the 1967 Middle East war, remained vital to Israel's defence.

Israel, which receives more than \$3 billion in annual aid from the United States, formally protested at the snub.

The U.S. row, which erupted last Wednesday, signalled a deepening rift since Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir rejected Baker's peace proposals last month.

The United States favours Israel returning occupied land in exchange for peace

'Hired trumpets' behind media reports of mistreatment in Kuwait, embassy says

By Nermeen Murad
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kuwaiti Embassy in Amman, in an effort "to answer the unfair media campaign" against the "alleged" mistreatment of Palestinians residing in Kuwait, issued a statement yesterday saying that such "campaigns" as orchestrated by "poisonous purveyors" can hardly help the cause of Palestinians and Jordanians who have resided in the emirate for decades.

"Everyone knows that our Palestinian brothers in the occupied territories execute fellow Palestinians who collaborate with the Israeli occupation authorities," the statement said. "Why is Kuwait being charged over the punishment, not killing, of those who collaborated with the defeated Iraqi occupation forces?" it asked.

The unsigned, six-point statement said "the Kuwaiti authorities have already announced their willingness to help all those who want to leave Kuwait."

Only 500 people have requested permission to leave the emirate, however, and "even those have asked for an exit and re-entry visa to Kuwait," the statement added.

"The long lines (of citizens) outside the embassy in Amman (who queue) to inquire about the time when they will be able to return to the country of goodness and safety, Kuwait, belie the false reports (of alleged mistreatment) of the 'hired trumpets' who spread these reports," the statement said.

In a thinly veiled threat to the local Jordanian newspapers to halt the publication of "these lies by hired trumpets," the statement said the "campaign would not benefit the sons of Jordan and Palestine who have been residing on the

good land of Kuwait for tens of years."

"We want to ask in all honesty and faithfulness whether these hired trumpets have learned of the hundreds or thousands of phone calls that have been made on daily basis between those who reside in Kuwait and their relatives in Jordan, and if they have heard of these contacts why there was no word of truth about (the situation in) Kuwait coming out?" the statement asked.

It went on to say: "In confirmation of the Kuwaiti leadership's interest in applying justice towards all those residing on the soil of Kuwait, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Salem Al Sabah has visited those detained on charges of collaboration with the Iraqi occupation forces."

Those detained, the statement added, "are no more than six hundred people from different nationalities and not

just Palestinians."

"His highness (the crown prince) has given the necessary instructions for these cases to be addressed by the office of the prosecutor general as quickly as possible, and those convicted of collaboration will be tried by courts according to the laws of the state of Kuwait," the statement said, adding that a measure of compassion has been decreed and will be adopted in spite of "the announcement of martial laws in the country."

Jordanian papers have been publishing Amnesty International reports, eyewitness accounts as well as reprinting articles from international papers which recount stories of torture and indiscriminate killing of Palestinians, Jordanians and other Arab nationals by Kuwaiti militias and army.

The embassy had been addressing several letters to

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Border with Iraq moved to curb smuggling

By Rana Sabbagh
Reuters

AMMAN — Jordan, anxious to curb a flow of guns across its border from Iraq and clamp down on smugglers, plans to move its border post to the actual frontier, Jordanian sources said on Thursday.

Jordan until now has had its border checkpoint at Ruweisah, 70 kilometres before the desert frontier at Treibee. The Amman-Baghdad highway has been Iraq's main link with the outside world since the Gulf crisis erupted.

"Work is under way to move the checkpoint and we hope to open the new post at Treibee as soon as possible," one source said.

"The amount of smuggling happening now is uncomparable to pre-war levels," another source said.

The Interior Ministry said it had no comment on the issue.

Two Jordanian policemen and two smugglers trying to enter from Iraq with trucks loaded with weapons were killed in a clash on the border six weeks ago, prompting Amman to reconsider border controls with Baghdad, the sources added.

Travellers coming to Jordan this week said customs officers inspected vehicles coming from Iraq from top to bottom and went through every item of luggage. Jordanian police have set up new checkpoints at regular stops along the road to Amman.

Jordan, enforcing U.N. sanctions against Baghdad, once its main trade partner, is allowing into Iraq only items approved by the U.N. sanctions committee, such as food and medicine and other humanitarian items.

But the sources said the smugglers were mostly bypassing the main highway to travel under cover of the vast Iraq-Jordanian desert.

They are bringing guns and machineguns, mostly Soviet-made Kalashnikov rifles from Iraq, and selling them in Jordan and other nearby countries at 20 times their purchase price.

Iraqis, short of essential commodities because of the U.N. trade embargo imposed after Baghdad's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait and badly in need of cash, were turning a blind eye on border security, the Jordanian sources said.

An Iraqi newspaper said on Wednesday that profiteers, particularly Jordanians, were arriving in war-torn Baghdad exchanging foodstuffs and other desperately needed items for Persian rugs, gold and other luxury items, for outside markets.

Babil (Babylon) newspaper, run by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday, accused some Jordanians of profiteering by exploiting the wide difference between the value of the Iraqi dinar on the official and black markets to buy goods.

It was the first public criticism of Jordanians, who overwhelmingly supported Iraq during the Gulf crisis. The dollar — 3.2 to the Iraqi dinar at the official rate — now fetches about 7.5 dinars on the black market.

U.S. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said this week there was no evidence to substantiate a newspaper report that Iraq was rebuilding its army by smuggling weapons from Asia through Jordan. Amman and Baghdad have denied the charges.

The Iraqi frontier formerly lay just beyond Ruweisah, a desolate dust-swept town 280 km northeast of Amman, until a border amendment gave Jordan more territory in the 1970s.

Jordan, officially neutral in the Gulf war, cracked down on smuggling to Iraq after it decided to adhere to the U.N. trade ban against its Arab neighbour.

Democrats may press probe into alleged hostage deal

WASHINGTON (R) — Democrats in congress are debating whether to launch an inquiry into charges that the 1980 Reagan-Bush presidential campaign conspired with Iran to delay the release of American hostages for political gain.

Such a probe would put the Democrats on a collision course with the Republican White House which has denied there was any such deal and says no probe is warranted.

"Let's try to stop this rumour mongering that's going on," President George Bush snapped at reporters during a picture-taking session Friday. "Stop repeating rumours over and over again ... It's sickening."

Calls for an investigation into the circumstances of the January 1981 release of 52 Americans

held hostage in Tehran have been revived by new charges from a former aide of former President Jimmy Carter.

The saga of the American hostages in Iran dogged the Carter presidency, tormenting the Democrat president personally, and is widely seen as the main factor in his humiliating election defeat at the hands of Ronald Reagan in November 1980.

Now Gary Sick, one of Carter's chief Iran experts at the time, has said he believes Reagan aides conspired with Israel and Iran to stop Carter scoring an electoral coup with the release of the hostages before the presidential vote.

The hostages were released just a few minutes after Reagan was sworn in as president on January 20, 1981 after being

held for 444 days. Bush was Reagan's vice-presidential running mate.

Sick, in an article in the New York Times and on television, said Reagan campaign leaders secretly agreed with Iranian officials that their administration would send arms and military spare parts to Iran — then Washington's bitterest foe — via Israel if Iran would hold the hostages until after the election.

Sick said William Casey, Reagan's campaign manager and later director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), held secret meetings in Madrid and Paris in 1980 with representatives of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, whose followers had taken over the U.S. embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979. Casey died in 1987.

Sick said that according to some of his sources Bush attended at least one of these alleged meetings in Paris in October of 1980 — a charge denied by Bush himself.

"Was I in Paris in 1980? Definitely, definitely, no," Bush told reporters Friday.

Carter himself has joined the chorus of calls for a formal investigation. He says the suggestion that Reagan aides conspired to keep hostages in Iran is "almost nauseating."

Some Democratic members of the house foreign affairs committee, encouraged by house speaker Thomas Foley, met Sick last Thursday to explore the allegations.

They will decide if there are grounds for pressing for a formal investigation.

Israeli police fire tear gas on Druse demonstrators

TEL AVIV (AP) — Police fired tear gas Sunday to stop members of Israel's Druse community who charged security barricades during a demonstration to demand government funding equal with Jewish Israelis.

Three policemen, including a precinct commander, were lightly injured in a shoving match with a small number of the about 500 protesters, police said. Israel radio also reported one demonstrator injured.

The Druse, from 16 villages in the north, organised the demonstration outside Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's office to demand increased government subsidies for their towns.

The Druse are an offshoot of Islam and live in Syria, Lebanon and Israel. There are about 80,000 Druse in Israel, including 15,000-20,000 in the Golan Heights which Israel annexed after its capture from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war.

Police spokeswoman Anat Granit said police fired tear gas after the Druse pushed aside police barriers and were forcibly

making their way towards the prime ministry.

Protesters said the police used the gas unnecessarily. They admitted to crossing the barriers, but young demonstrators said the real shoving began only after Druse protesters.

The protesters said government subsidies received by Druse communities amounted to only about one-third the amount per citizen as those given Jewish communities.

Eldad Halachmi, an aide to Arab affairs adviser David Magen, said there has been inequality but the government has been trying to increase funding to Druse towns and villages.

After Druse leaders met with Finance Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Interior Minister Arye Deri, Israel radio reported agreement was reached to put 15 million shekels (\$7.5 million) into Druse communities as part of a package of 160 million shekels (\$80 million) pledged over the next five years.

Gulf war highlights contradictions of Muslim World

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — The Gulf war highlighted the contradictions of the Muslim World and the war could have been probably been averted if Muslims had condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim said.

Anwar said Muslim intellectuals and religious experts have been misled and failed to understand the true meaning of "jihad" or holy war, reflecting a state of confusion among adherents of the religion.

Anwar, considered one of the leading experts on Muslim matters in the Malaysian cabinet, said, "For centuries, attempts have been made to clarify and educate Muslims on the true meaning of jihad, and yet, when it is explained by dictators and oppressors, not only the common Muslims are misled but the so called Ulama (religious experts) and intellectuals also fall into the same trap," he said.

"The manipulative political side of the Gulf conflict was evident in fervent calls made for jihad," he said in his address to a conference on Muslim cooperation Friday.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had called for jihad against allied forces.

Though Muslims need to be jointly committed to the reconstruction of Iraq and Kuwait, religious adherents must realise that some issues transcend material replenishments and regional security considerations, Anwar said.

Intellectual reconstruction will also be needed, he added.

"At the scholastic front, in debates such as (CQ) the Gulf war, there was total absence of a critical and coherent appraisal. Instead, polemics and rigidity dominated the scene of a people intolerant of free expression."

"The Muslim psyche revels in emotional outbursts, yet it remains oblivious to the national behaviour demanded by the complex realities of the global order. There are slogans and rallying cries aplenty by which the masses are deceptively manipulated," he said.

Anwar said recent events had made Muslims morally and intellectually docile, blaming all problems on the colonial legacy but condoning aggression of one Muslim against another.

He said if Muslims had spoken in an effective voice against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, war probably could have been averted.

"We are ideologically dismembered," he said.

"The rampant corruption, hunger, chronic poverty, illiteracy, gender asymmetry, disregard for fundamental human rights, economic disparities, absence of basic freedom, tolerance of or even collusion with tyrannical systems, denial of educational and employment opportunities to women, degenerative education facilities and a fractured socio-economic network are not the symptoms but the causes of our decay," he said.

Iraqi journalists call for press freedom, paper attacks them

NICOSIA (R) — Iraq's journalists' union has called on its 2,000 members to take advantage of President Saddam Hussein's promise of greater press freedom but a newspaper run by president's eldest son Uday apparently views the move with some suspicion.

The newspaper, the daily Babil (Babylon), which Uday launched during the Gulf crisis in competition with Baghdad's government-controlled newspapers, on Sunday blasted the union. It described some Iraqi journalists as "serpents."

President Saddam, since the Gulf war fighting stopped, has said he was steering the country towards greater democracy under his new Prime Minister Saddam Hammadi.

The new Information Minister

Hamid Youssef Hummadi declared last month that laws guaranteeing press freedom were in their final stages of preparation and the process was irreversible. The union call last week took President Saddam at his word, quoting his appeal last month to journalists to "write without hesitation, or fear."

The union said journalists were aware of their responsibilities and would "rise to the level of the task in effectively participating in deepening the democratic march in Iraq."

Babil, in an unsigned commentary, retorted that some journalists acted as the venom-injecting teeth of serpents.

"What is apparent is that these serpents' teeth are still there and we have not discovered them yet," it said.

Sunday's Babil commentary was especially critical of the union's leadership and its President Sabah Yassin, a columnist who ironically also works for Uday's father-in-law, Iraqi Vice-President Izzat Ibrahim.

"Do the ethics of the profession or democracy allow the defence of individuals whose writings served hostile propaganda and sought to destabilise the confidence between the citizen and his state?" it said.

"The national enthusiasm by the journalists' union did not appear during the war of aggression against Iraq," it said in a reference to the Gulf war.

Supporters of press freedoms say the attack by the paper was part of efforts by some officials to prevent a real relaxation of restrictions on the press in Iraq.

President Saddam's press secretary Abdul Jabbar Mohsen, writing in another newspaper last week, lambasted the journalists' union. He argued that "democracy should be denied to elements opposed to the revolution," a reference to the ruling Baath Party.

Reports from Baghdad say that Uday last month summoned Saad Al Bazzaz, former director of the Iraqi News Agency (INA) and current editor of the government newspaper Al Jumhuriya, after the paper published a series of articles critical to the government.

But the unprecedented debate has continued with columnists in government papers criticising some ministers and airing grievances about matters such as inflation and bureaucracy.

Iraqi police in security zone just want to go home

By Alistair Lyon
Reuter

AMADIYAH, Iraq — The 10 Iraqi policemen still in Amadiyah would very much like to go home, which would also suit the Western troops protecting Kurds in this Iraqi town.

"We don't feel comfortable. We feel threatened. The Americans say: 'Go home tomorrow,'" said Second-Lieutenant Saleh Wayess. "The problem is we have no orders from the police directorate in Dahok. We can't go without orders."

The unarmed Iraqi policemen were sitting outside their station when a British marine patrol passed by.

Major Mike Winpenny told them that Brigadier Nushwan Danoun, the senior Iraqi officer liaising with the allies, had agreed that all Iraqi forces — except those guarding President Saddam Hussein's summer palace a few kilometres to the west — would withdraw 30 kilometres to the south.

"Fine," said Wayess, 25. "But no one told us and we have no telephone or radio."

Winpenny promised to look into their problem.

The policeman said Kurdish peshmerga guerrillas had drunk tea with them in the morning. "Thank God we aren't afraid of them. We are brother Iraqis," said Wayess.

Amadiyah is the forward base for British, French, U.S. and Dutch troops setting up sanctuaries for Iraqi refugees.

Perched on a fortress-like crag overlooking a green valley, Amadiyah is usually home to about 8,000 people. It is now almost deserted, except for a few Christian families who stayed during the Kurdish uprising in March and its bloody aftermath.

Some Kurdish families are drifting back from the Iranian border to find their homes looted and vandalised.

"This is what Saddam did to us," said Mowafa Jamil Khaled. His once pleasant courtyard home is a jumble of scattered clothes, kitchen utensils and family photos. The carpets are smeared with excrement and everything of value has been taken.

"We heard on foreign radios the allies were in Amadiyah. I paid 1,000 dinars for the 18-hour drive to bring my wife and eight children home," said Khaled, 37, a shopkeeper.

"I think now all the people of Amadiyah will come back. Since the allies arrived we are not afraid of Saddam. If they (the allies) leave, it's better if they kill us first," he said.

A few doors down, a Syrian Christian family offered a yoghurt drink. "Our future is dark," said Dariawush Patros, 41, a teacher. "We just want order and no problems."

British marines distributing U.S. military food rations to anyone they could find, said the United Nations would bring in flour, rice and other staples in the next few days.

Kurdish peshmerga guerrillas mingle easily with Western troops on the road east and west of Amadiyah. French paratroopers keep a watchful eye on traffic at the furthest allied-held village of Deralok, 16 kilometres to the east.

A few hundred metres away, Iraqi soldiers, preparing to depart, sat by the roadside. Behind

them, peshmerga guerrillas squatted in the grass, drinking tea.

British military spokesman Major Bob Fanshawe, said the coalition forces were consolidating their hold on the security zone they extended to the Amadiyah region Thursday.

"We're making the area more secure and continuing talks with the Iraqis on withdrawals. They are withdrawing to the south."

Most Iraqi soldiers have withdrawn from the security zone but there is a fuzzy area at the fringes where Western troops, Iraqis and guerrillas overlap — so far without incident.

Fanshawe said British marine commandos posted in mountains to the north were contacting the peshmerga and providing the physical presence at waystations to assist refugees returning from Turkey.

"We haven't met large numbers of refugees yet but they are filtering through," he told Reuters at Sarsank Airport, west of Amadiyah, where U.S. engineers had brought in equipment to repair the runway cratered by allied bombing in the Gulf war.

Surface normality returns to Baghdad

By Paul Holmes
Reuter

BAGHDAD — Young couples are celebrating their weddings again in Baghdad's luxury hotels. Thousands of cars jam the crowded streets.

Construction crews are working overtime to knock down the shells of bomb-shattered buildings.

A punter among the impassioned crowd at the horse track eyes the race card expertly. "This is what war is now about," the man joked. "Is my horse going to win or not?"

Life is returning to some sort of normality after the devastation of the six-week Gulf war that drove Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

Less than 10 weeks after the war was halted, an all-out drive

by President Saddam Hussein to instil an impression that it never happened is gradually removing the evidence.

The United States and its allies destroyed government buildings, airports, telecommunication centres and two of 12 Baghdad bridges over the Tigris River in air raids which a U.N. report said had bombed Iraq to a pre-industrial age.

Couples in the company of street musicians hired to play at their wedding parties are flocking to the big hotels that were for the most part shattered throughout the war.

The lifting last week of petrol rationing to mark President Saddam's 54th birthday brought cars teeming back to the streets of the capital, replacing the bicycles and horse-drawn carts used to get

around during and immediately after the war.

The two largest oil refineries — at Baiji northeast of Baghdad and Al Dora on the edge of the capital — are back in operation after hasty repairs.

They are not running at full capacity but the director of Al Dora, Kamal Al Fadi, said last week that his refinery hoped to be back to pre-war production of 90,000 barrels per day by mid-day.

Squads of workers using heavy equipment are demolishing floor by floor the remnants of buildings struck by allied bombs and missiles with surgical precision.

Water and electricity have been restored to Baghdad and other cities although voltage is low, the supply is intermittent

and not all districts are covered.

Some telephone lines have been restored in the capital though it is not possible to phone outside an individual district. Only 12 international lines linking Baghdad to Jordan are operating, officials say.

"God willing, we will rebuild Baghdad to be 10 times better than it was before attacked by the allies," President Saddam said last week in a speech in the town of Ramadi, west of Baghdad.

Saddam has sought to rally Iraq behind a huge reconstruction effort, codified this month in an eight-month government plan to rebuild damaged installations, provide food and medicine and restore normal public services.

The drive coincides with attempts to restore political sta-

bility with a pledge of democracy following uprisings after the Gulf war in the Kurdish north and mainly Shiite Muslim centre and south of Iraq.

But beneath the surface impression of normality it is clear that Iraq cannot restore full services fast without the foreign help denied it under U.N. Security Council economic sanctions in force since soon after Iraqi invasion of Kuwait last August.

Industry minister General Amer Hammoudi Al Saadi said 90 per cent of Iraq's national power grid has been destroyed in allied air raids.

Plans to raise distribution capacity to 2,650 megawatts by July will meet only about half of Iraq's peak summer needs.

"If additional potential from abroad were made available, this would cut the time for restoring electricity in the country to what it was before the aggression," the minister said.

Factories are not expected to resume work fully for two months and plans are being drawn up to ration power.

Motorists complain that although petrol is no longer rationed, the quality is poor because of a shortage of the imported additives needed to boost the octane level.

Even the crowds at the track, although dense, are down from what they were before the war stopped horse racing for two months.

"Life has got so expensive," one spectator complained.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran raises fears about Kuwait with French minister

TEHRAN (R) — Iran is worried about recent developments in liberated Kuwait, Iranian officials told visiting French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas on Friday. French Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati raised Tehran's fears during a meeting with Dumas. "The Iranians are worried about the internal situation in Kuwait, on both the political and ecological front," Bernard said. Bernard gave no details of Iranian worries over politics but said Velayati was concerned that two months after the Iraqi army quit the emirate, oil wells were still burning unchecked. Dumas, who is due in Kuwait after his two-day visit to Iran, told the Iranian News Agency IRNA: "Our presence in Tehran is evidence of the French government's political will to expand and deepen ties with Iran."

Dutch ready to host Iraq reparations panel

THE HAGUE (R) — The Netherlands would be willing to host a U.N.-backed Gulf war reparations commission, a foreign ministry spokesman said. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, in line with Security Council resolutions, is setting up a commission to assess damage claims against Iraq arising from its occupation of Kuwait and the Gulf war that followed. Funds for reparations are expected to be raised by compelling Iraq to hand over a fixed percentage of future oil revenues. The Hague already houses several institutions involved in settling international disputes, including the International Court of Justice and the Iran-U.S. claims tribunal which settles financial claims arising from the 1979 Iranian revolution.

U.S. seeking permanent secure autonomous Kurdish region

LONDON (AP) — A newspaper on Saturday quoted a confidential draft U.S. military position paper as saying the United States is working to establish a permanent, secure autonomous Kurdish region as part of Iraq's war reparations. The London newspaper The Independent said the document reflects deepening U.S. anxiety about the costs and dangers of the present safe-haven relief operation for Kurds inside Iraq. It said the document is a summary of a transition plan in draft form which is subtitled "How to change a large military floodlight into 1,000 flashlights." It said this was an oblique reference to President George Bush's "thousand points of light" plan to use citizen volunteers to do the work of the government in fighting poverty and crime. Reporter Leonard Doyle said in the story from New York: "The draft transition plan, which has been obtained by The Independent, bluntly recommends the establishment of 'a permanent, secure autonomous Kurdish region as part of Iraqi reparations.' 'Washington's near-term objective,' it continues, is to wind down operation provide comfort (the safe-haven operation) as soon as possible. 'The draft makes the assumption that the coordination of military security for the Kurds will be taken over by the United Nations or 'another nation with multinational support' although talks so far have failed to secure agreement on the establishment of a U.N. police force. 'The document was obtained indirectly from the U.S. military on the Turkish border. It is thought to reflect U.S. military strategic planning for the crisis in line with objectives set by Washington. 'Senior U.S. sources in New York said they did not believe that it reflected government policy and it had not been raised in any talks with U.N. officials or among Security Council members. But Doyle said the suggestion that Kurdish autonomy should be part of Iraq's war reparations was certain to cause controversy at the Security Council and seemed to reflect the allies' desire to keep pressure on President Saddam Hussein to drive him from office. Doyle quoted the document as saying that within the proposed autonomous Kurdish region, the United States should 'direct efforts toward rebuilding the agrarian economy' and 'provide seed resources for the petroleum industry.' Doyle said this implied that it was proposed that the Kurds would gain control of the oil-producing region of Kirkuk. He said the document added that the United States should 'rely on other nations for military forces' and 'only provide U.S. resources for functions not otherwise available.'

Cyprus to import water

NICOSIA (AP) — The island nation of Cyprus plans to import water from Greece to help cope with a major drought, the official Cyprus News Agency reported. The agency said a committee headed by President George Vassiliou decided to import water from the Greek island of Crete. Agriculture Minister Andreas Gavrielides said the water would start arriving in six months. The committee also decided to ask tenders for construction of desalination plants in the country of 740,000 people, the agency said. Heading into the dry summer season, Cyprus' dams now hold only 56 million cubic metres of water — 21 per cent of their capacity. The committee also decided to cut supplies of irrigation water by 30 per cent, the agency said. It reported current water reserves are estimated to last until next January.

Fahd orders 400 million riyals for Bangladesh

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP) — Saudi Arabian King Fahd has ordered over \$100 million in urgent government aid for Bangladesh and has appealed for private donations from his nation in the name of Islam. The official Saudi Press Agency reported late Friday that the king issued instructions to extend 400 million riyals (\$106 million) to the government of Bangladesh "repair public utilities damaged by the cyclone." The Saudi monarch also appealed to the citizens to "donate what they can and offer some of the Zakat on their money to the Islamic brothers harmed by the devastating cyclone and floods that spread through extensive areas of the sister Islamic republic of Bangladesh," the statement said.

Soviet Kurds donate aid for Iraqi refugees

MOSCOW (R) — Kurds living in the Soviet republic of Kazakhstan are donating money and organising medical aid for Kurdish refugees in Iraq, the official TASS news agency reported on Sunday.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 73111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:30 La Belle Anglaise
19:00 News in French
19:15 Weekly Sports Magazine
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Empty Nest
21:00 Inside Story
22:00 News in English
22:30 Derrick

PRAYER TIMES

06:16 Fajr
05:42 (Sursat) Duha
12:32 Dhuhr
16:12 Asr
19:23 Maghrib
20:49 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifich Tel. 81740
Assumption of God Church, Tel. 62385
St. Joseph Church Tel. 62385
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 63740
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 775261
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 777571
Armenian International Church Tel. 685326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 654932
The Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology:

Another rise in temperatures will take place and winds will be easterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and sea calm.

Amman Min./max. temp. 12 / 29
Aqaba 20 / 35
Deserts 12 / 31
Jordan Valley 18 / 34

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 27, Aqaba 32. Humidity readings:

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Amman 25 per cent. Aqaba 21 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mohammed Mansour 741444
Dr. Ameer Al Haj 771020
Dr. Abdul Aziz Tadmor 783708
Dr. Youssef Sammour 615648
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637025
Nairoba pharmacy 623672
Al Sakam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 640485
Shameeni pharmacy 637660

DEBDA:
Dr. Hamdi Barham 273825
Al Shama pharmacy 273825

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate 630241
Rescue 630241
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 75121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 608800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Amman Municipality

COMPLAINTS

Telephone Information 767111
(directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 60230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53220
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldi Maternity, J. Amn. 64281/6
Alkhali Maternity, J. Amn. 64241/2
Ibn Al-Nafis Maternity 64252
Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palatine, Shmeimi

Shmeimi Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musader Hospital 6572719
The Islamic, Abdal 6612737
Al-Ahli, Abdal 6641646
Ibn Al-Nafis, J. Amn. 77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Amn. 7751126
Army, Marfa 89161/15
Queen Alia Hospital 60224050
Amal Hospital 674444
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)991071
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
RUBD:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Rn Al-Nafis Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (09)53205, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Fl

Home News

JORDAN TIMES, MONDAY, MAY 6, 1991

Crimes on the rise in Jordan — PSD

AMMAN (Petra) — Public Security Department (PSD) Director Maj. Gen. Fadel Ali Fuhaid Sunday said that crimes, particularly thefts, are on the increase in Jordan, noting that thieves have made use of modern technology, which has provided more sophisticated methods and tools, as well as of the right social, economic and cultural circumstances "where crime can fester and thrive."

However, he noted, Jordan is still far from the danger of organised crime.

Addressing the teachers and the dean of Amman University College, Maj. Gen. Fuhaid said that social institutions, such as schools and universities, did not play their potential role in spreading awareness about crimes and extending guidance and counselling to students attending such institutions.

He said school dropouts work in "bad" places, and bad friends were causing contributing to the increase in crimes.

Maj. Gen. Fuhaid noted that the Jordanian society did not suffer or complain from drug addiction, however, "one cannot foresee how the situation would

be, given the rise in the drug trafficking activity through Jordan," in view of its central position between producing countries in the north and consuming countries in the south.

He pointed out the successes achieved by the PSD anti-narcotic teams in foiling all contraband attempts through Jordan, but said that such efforts alone could not do the job unless they are joined by the effort of citizens, academic and social institutions.

In addition to fighting the trafficking of narcotics, the PSD works on the rehabilitation of addiction cases, thus carrying out a humanitarian mission.

Maj. Gen. Fuhaid said that the PSD sought to enhance cooperation and mutual confidence between the PSD personnel and citizens in implementation of the comprehensive security concept which the PSD had earlier charted.

In another meeting with students from Yarmouk University, Maj. Gen. Fuhaid outlined the duties and responsibilities of the PSD and reviewed the organisational stages the department has gone through.

JCO experiments prove successful, foresee self-sufficiency in lean meat

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan currently produces 27 per cent of its total needs of lean meat and nearly 49 per cent of its dairy products, but this is being increased through the agricultural cooperatives working under the umbrella of the Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO), according to the organisation's Director General Jamal Bedour.

"The JCO is encouraging the cooperatives, especially those dealing with livestock, and recent experiments on sheep fattening have proved tremendously successful and contributing to efforts designed to help Jordan produce sufficient meat for consumption," Mr. Bedour said during a workshop attended by stock breeders in the north of the country.

The JCO operates centres for fattening sheep; the centres have recently succeeded in enabling the sheep to increase by 350 grammes per day by providing fodder to the animals at the centre, up from 150 grammes a day, by following the old methods of grazing in the fields, said Mr. Bedour at the workshop which focused attention on meeting the country's growing needs of meat.

Over the past two months, Mr. Bedour said, JCO stations received and provided for 40,000 heads of sheep, all passing through this experiment to increase their weight, and in the light of this success, the organisation plans to expand the centres' activities and upgrade the work of 31 cooperatives which together own 356,471 heads of sheep.



Jamal Bedour

The JCO has just worked out a plan for reaching the stockbreeders in order to set up a union for them, to conduct regular visits by JCO specialists to the farms to discuss problems impeding stockbreeding and to find solutions for them, Mr. Bedour added.

"At present, the JCO centres focus attention on the production of green fodder for the animals and is encouraging cooperatives to follow suit, he said.

Furthermore the JCO has over the past two months purchased JD 1.3 million worth of equipment that can be used by stockbreeders to produce fodder, and has purchased JD 100,000 worth of veterinary medicines to be sold to the cooperatives at cost price in a bid to encourage meat production," Mr. Bedour pointed out.

He said that the JCO would re-examine the price of spraying farmlands, which now stands at 900 fils per dunum, and that of seeds which are currently sold at 800 fils for each dunum.

According to Mr. Bedour, the JCO, in cooperation with local farmers, grew improved cereals on 40,000 dunums of land in the 1990-1991 agricultural season, and JCO's tractors helped plough 162,000 dunums of land, up from 128,000 dunums in 1989, to help increase grain production. Mr. Bedour said that through close cooperation in this matter Jordan was expected to become self-sufficient in lean meat in the foreseeable future.

Jordan, Saudi Arabia reach pilgrimage agreement

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and Saudi Arabia have reached agreement on arrangements for Jordanian pilgrims performing this year's pilgrimage in Mecca and Medina, according to Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Secretary-General Ahmad Helayel.

The agreement, which Mr. Helayel signed here with his Saudi counterpart Abdul Wahab Abdul Wasee, provides for maintaining the same number of Jordanian pilgrims for this year as last year, which is nearly 15,000, in accordance with resolutions taken by the 1987 resolutions of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) which limited the number of Muslims performing the pilgrimage from each country each year, said Mr. Helayel, who arrived in Jeddah three days ago to discuss arrangements for the Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca) this year.

Mr. Helayel told Radio Jordan at noon Sunday that the agreement allowed the Jordanian pilgrims the right to choose the site of their lodgings during the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Also agreed with the Saudi side were matters concerning the site of camps for the pilgrims at Arafat and Mina holy sites where

Muslims perform their religious rites during the pilgrimage season, Mr. Helayel added.

Mr. Helayel said that the pilgrims would be also offered services by the Saudi guides, at the sites of the two holy cities, and the Jordanian buses transporting the pilgrims would be allowed to enter the two cities to unload the luggage of the Jordanian pilgrims.

He said that the buses would also be allowed to transport the pilgrims to and from Mina and Arafat holy sites on the eighth day of the pilgrimage season.

Special clauses were included in the agreement providing for similar services to the pilgrims from the occupied Arab territories who will be making the trip through Jordanian territory, Mr. Helayel pointed out.

Mr. Helayel said that the Saudi side had assured him that all the pilgrims arriving from Jordan would receive very good treatment, and normal Haj services, not only at the holy sites but also along the land route to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Helayel described his talks with Abdul Wasee and other Saudi officials as very successful and fruitful. He said the discussions were held in a brotherly atmosphere that reflected the

strong ties between Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

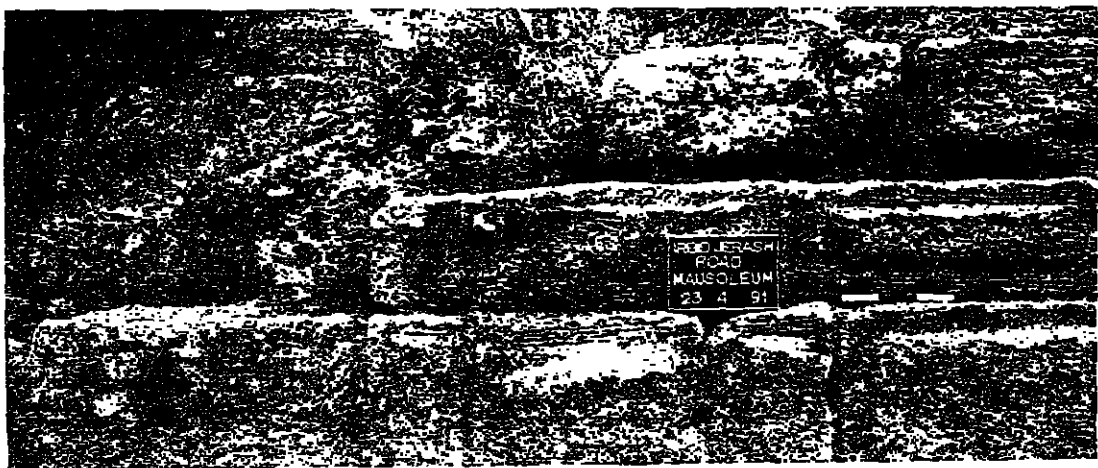
Asked on arrangements to be taken by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Amman for the transportation of the pilgrims later this month, Mr. Helayel said that the ministry had laid down a set of principles and guidelines for this arrangement and would reach agreement with a number of local transport companies to carry the pilgrims on air conditioned buses.

He noted however that the ministry would this year avoid dealing with the national Haj company which last year was alleged to have failed to honour the agreement with the ministry concerning the transportation and the housing of the pilgrims.

Before leaving for Jeddah, Mr. Helayel said in Amman that he would visit Mecca and Medina to meet the Saudi company officials who cater to the transportation and housing needs of the pilgrims.

He said that one of the five basic duties of Islam and should be performed by every Muslim at least once in his lifetime if he has the means to do it.

This year, Al Adha (sacrifice) feast which marks the end of the pilgrimage season in Mecca, is expected towards the middle of June.



The image of the latest archaeological discovery on the path of Jerash-Irbid road could be among the last recordings as the monument will soon be destroyed (Photo by Gaetano Palumbo)

Archaeological find to be destroyed by new road

By Maha Adissi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The new road that stretches between Irbid/Jarash-Jerash will pass right through what could be an archaeological "treasure" in Jerash and completely destroy it.

The recently discovered monument, which is 800m north of the Zarga River bridge on the old road to Jerash, may have been a watchtower or a mausoleum dating from the first century A.D. and it lies in the path of the new road.

Because the road must be constructed on a solid foundation, the monument may have to be removed thus destroying this ancient relic.

Changing the plan for the new road, so that it would bypass this monument, would delay the completion of the road, which is being constructed by the Ministry of Public Works.

Archaeological consultant for the Cultural Resource Management (CRM) project, a joint one between the American Centre for Oriental Research (ACOR) and the Department of Antiquities, and which is funded by the United States Agency for Interna-

tional Development (USAID). Dr. Gaetano Palumbo, said that such a monument usually initiates a regular excavation season where every little detail is studied by archaeologists.

"Now we are working against time so all we can do is some salvage excavation where we have a limited amount of time to study the site photograph it and collect some of the pottery before it is completely destroyed," Dr. Palumbo said expressing hope that an alternative to completely destroying the relic could be considered.

"It would be invaluable to archaeologists if the monument is kept intact, buried, and the road built above it," Dr. Palumbo added.

The archaeology Inspector in Jerash Ali Musa Saleh said that destroying the monument seemed inevitable as the possibility of changing the line of the new road seems unfeasible.

An informed source at the Ministry of Public Works, who preferred anonymity, said that the monument must be removed because the level of the new road was below the lowest point of the monument.

"There is no alternative to re-

moving the monument, but we will give ACOR and the Department of Antiquities all the time they need to complete their salvage excavation work in the area," he said adding that the new road is expected to be completed by the end of 1992.

But there are other reasons why the monument must be removed.

The law on conditions of contract and construction works provides for certain changes, but altering the road alignment is not stipulated by the law.

Ms. Ruba Kanaan, the planning consultant for CRM, said that CRM was a project that helped prevent or minimise the accidental destruction of antiquities in Jordan that may occur because of lack of planning between bodies involved in construction projects.

"The CRM project can only be implemented when construction is in the planning stage, otherwise we resort to emergency salvage excavation where archaeologists are literally working in front of a bulldozer before it destroys a certain sites," she said.

TCC launches campaign against defaulting subscribers

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) has started publishing the names of those defaulting payments for telephone charges over the past years, and of those whose subscription has long been terminated, warning that in case of further delay in payment, the defaulters would face court action.

Accompanying the names was a statement by Minister of Finance Basel Jaradich noting that the defaulters have 15 days to settle their dues to the TCC so as to avoid legal measures against them in accordance with the 1952 law on collection of state funds.

The TCC has resorted to the law in order to collect dues from subscribers whose telephone services have been permanently terminated, and, according to the TCC deputy director for financial affairs, Ahmad Munes, a total of JD 6 million is still to be settled by the defaulters.

Mr. Munes said in a radio statement last month that telephone services to 13,500 subscribers had been terminated and contacts with the subscribers were maintained to persuade them to settle their bills before legal measures are taken.

In March, the TCC carried out an intensive campaign to collect its dues from subscribers in Amman and other areas of Jordan

and said that nearly JD 10 million had to be settled.

Mr. Munes said that 7,800 subscribers had already settled their bills, but the rest were still ignoring the TCC appeals.

In accordance with the terms of the 1952 law, the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications can resort to confiscating a person's property until the dues are settled.

JD 2.2 m collected in land fees

AMMAN (Petra) — The Land and Survey Department last April collected JD 2.2 million in fees for the registrations of land and property, thus netting an increase of 33 per cent over the figures of April 1990.

MAP

مسيرة الجمعة ١٩٩١ / ٥ / ١٠

الجمعية الأردنية للطبي للفلسطينيين ١٩٩١ / ٥ / ١٠

Under the Patronage of H.R.H. Crown Prince Al - Hassan

Join Jordan Medical Aid for Palestinians SPONSORED WALK

Date, time and venue
The Walk will start at Amra Hotel at 8:30 a.m. on Friday 10th of May 1991 and will follow the route outlined on the map below. Participants are requested to arrive not later than 8:00 a.m. It will end at Al Rajha village near Wadi Al Sir.

Stations
The Walk will be divided into substages (stations) 1.5 km apart. Participants collect a yellow card at Amra Hotel and will be given a new card at each station.

How much should one walk?
One can walk as he/she wants, but the minimum valid distance is 1.5 km. i.e. one should get at least the first card.

Food & drinks
Participants with yellow cards will be provided with refreshments and drinks free of charge along the route at every station upon the presentation of the yellow card.

Buses & Shuttles
These will be available during the walk to take the participants to Al Rajha and back to Amra Hotel. An ambulance will be on stand by in case of emergency.

Police supervision
The police have been notified and will be available to ensure the safety of the participants.

Media Coverage
The event shall be covered by T.V., radio and the local newspapers.

Collection of money
After completing the walk, the money pledged by all sponsors on each form, should be brought back to the organising committee not later than 25th of May 1991.

"Khaimat Baladna 10/5/1991"

For Walkers and non-Walkers
For the whole Family
Come and spend Friday at "Khaimat Baladna"
Al Rajha/Wadi Al Sir
Traditional foods and light lunch will be on sale

For more information please call 611065 Riyadh Centre 2nd floor.

IPU urges Israeli withdrawal

AMMAN (Petra) — The Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) which concluded its meetings in Pyongyang Saturday evening has called for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and stressed the need to preserve the human rights of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, according to deputy speaker of the Upper House of Parliament Ahmad Obeidat who represented Jordan at the meeting.

Mr. Obeidat, a former prime minister, said in an interview with Radio Jordan on Sunday that the IPU had decided to form three main committees: the disarmament committee, the human rights committee, and the political affairs committee.

The Arab delegations at the meeting, Mr. Obeidat said, have met before the formation of these committees to agree on several issues. He added that there were some additional articles suggested by the Arab delegations.

Mr. Obeidat affirmed that the atmosphere of the meeting was positive and helped improve inter-Arab relations.

The Jordanian delegation, he said, has held contacts with all the Arab delegations at the meeting and met with senior North Korean officials.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITION

- ☆ Art exhibition by Nazir Issa at the French Cultural Centre.
- ☆ Art exhibition by Ahmad Nawash and Yasser Durweik at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.

FILMS

- ☆ Film entitled "The Shadow Line" at the British Council — 6:00 p.m.
- ☆ French film entitled "Un dimanche à la campagne" at the French Cultural Centre — 8:00 p.m.

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Settlements and hollow words

THE European Community (EC) has come out against the "new" Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories and for regarding them as "especially harmful at a time when all parties should show flexibility and realism." In a statement last Saturday, the 12 member states said "they are gravely concerned at the recent establishment of two new Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, at Revava on April 15 and 16 and at Talmon Keva on April 22."

This is not the first time that the European countries have voiced concern at Israel's determination to go ahead with its settlement programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In fact, it is most likely that this European rhetorical anxiety will not be the last either, for clearly Israel is bent on proceeding at full speed with its settlement campaign, come what may. But the real reason why Israel will not pay heed to the various protestations against settlement construction is because they are usually couched in such diplomatic language and they so lack the back-up in action on the ground that their significance extends not an inch beyond being mere words. And when the punch lines of the EC's most recent declaration are simply directed against the "new" settlements at Revava and Talmon Keva, Tel Aviv will only be led to believe that bygones are indeed bygones, meaning that Israel would have to worry about the newest settlements but not about the older ones.

If the EC countries are truly concerned by Israel's colonisation drive and they genuinely believe it is a grave obstacle to peace they are invited to translate for a change their words and sentiments into some kind of action-oriented policy that will hold water with the other players involved. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and his right wing partners in the government are not likely to take EC capitals seriously as long as their statements are sugarcoated and intended more at posturing and public relations than seeing them through. No-one is suggesting that European troops be sent to march on Israel to make it respect the wise words of counsel showered on it from almost every side. All we are saying and asking for is the application of a more forceful diplomatic and economic policy vis-a-vis the Jewish state — for as long as it maintains its intransigent attitude at any rate.

Needless to say, peace in the Middle East is buried in the mushrooming Israeli settlements, as the Israeli Peace Now Movement has rightly put it at the site of the new Revava Israeli colony on Saturday. Would the EC capitals lend support therefore to the voices of peace within and outside Israel by putting the squeeze on Israel, at least economically? Tel Aviv now depends on the EC market for its economic development and well being as it is pining high hopes on cultivating even further the big EC market that will be established in 1992. If the EC is indeed serious, its member states can exert real pressure on the Israeli government to respect and honour Europe's solemn pronouncements on the issue of settlements and other dimensions of the peace process. Otherwise, Europe's statements would remain hollow words that would subtract or add nothing to the course of events in the region.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i daily Sunday strongly called for the Arab Nation's voice to be raised against the on-going colonisation of northern Iraq and the repression being exercised by the Israelis against the Palestinian people. We are not demanding that food supplies be dropped on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as is being done in northern Iraq, nor are we demanding that the Western allies send forces to provide protection to the Palestinians in the face of Zionist terrorism, simply because this is beyond our reach, but we are asking that the injustice be reinstated and people regain their rights, said the paper. The daily said that Arab capitals are keeping silent about these serious developments in Iraq and Palestine, but not a single Arab capital can escape the anti-Arab designs being concocted by the Zionist-western alliance. What is needed is a concerted and strong Arab stand in the face of the hostile policies being directed against the Arab people at large, especially in Palestine where the Zionists are pursuing settlement programmes and in Iraq where the western alliance is laying the ground for a new era of colonial rule, the paper demanded. The Arabs should not give Washington, Paris and London the chance to maintain their total disregard of the Arab Nation's interests, and should not succumb to blackmail under any circumstances, the paper stressed. What is needed urgently now, the paper added, is a concerted action in the face of the western alliance which destroyed Iraq in the name of the international legitimacy and is condoning Israel's continued aggression and occupation of Arab land in Palestine.

The Jordanian government is urged to take practical action at the international level to put an end to American acts of piracy against Jordan, because the national interests are now at stake, says a columnist in Al Ra'i daily Sunday. Tareq Masarweh notes that diplomatic channels to which the government had resorted in the past to stop the harassment of ships heading for Aqaba loaded with goods destined for Jordan, had been futile and the contacts with the American government directly through U.S. Secretary of State James Baker also proved unproductive. The Americans seem intent on punishing Jordan for adopting a national policy during the Gulf crisis and the western nations at large seem to be intent on subjugating Jordan to their will through intimidation and through illegal interception of cargo vessels heading for Aqaba, the writer points out. We have done nothing to be ashamed of, nor did we endanger any other country's interests, and yet this dirty game is being played to weaken our national economy, the writer continues. He says that the Jordanian government can put an end to this piracy and expose America's illegal actions by openly demanding a U.N. Security Council meeting and a ruling in this matter by the International Court of Justice. He says that the question of harassment of ships and the closure of the Jordanian-Saudi borders should be top priorities for the government.

Weekly Political Pulse

Liberalise educational system!

By Waleed Sadi

A FEW years ago, the International School of Choueifat wanted to establish in Jordan a branch school to serve the needs of Jordanians for excellence in elementary and secondary education. Jordan was chosen because of its centrist position in the Middle East and because it enjoyed a favourable political and social climate not to mention its moderate weather conditions. The administration of that prestigious school even went as far as selecting the land where its campus would be constructed and even made a deposit on the purchase of the land. Choueifat had picked a picturesque piece of land on the way to Amman's international airport. Then our educators in the government intervened and started showering the applicants of the Lebanese institution with suffocating rules and restrictions that the Board of trustees of the school could not stomach. It was then determined that the horizon of Jordan's educational bureaucracy was not in harmony with the kind of education that Choueifat wanted to extend to Jordan. It seems that the Lebanese school sought to make Jordan a mecca for quality education that would serve the regional needs of the Middle East at a time when our educators had no such vision. At the end, the school officials simply packed up their bags and went somewhere else. In the process, Jordan lost not only a good school and another opportunity to offer Jordanians and Arab children of the Middle East a balanced and contemporary schooling, but also an industry in education that could have earned the country much needed hard currency and saved it as well some funds that are spent on educating some Jordanians children abroad.

It so happens that Choueifat School is one of the most prestigious schools of Lebanon in which no less than two generations of Jordanians, Syrians, Iraqis and Egyptians had received excellent education. The Lebanese conflict that erupted back in the mid seventies caused the leaders of the school to seek other outlets within and outside the Middle East. Sharjah was the

first to welcome the school and Choueifat School opened up there in 1976 with only 37 students. Now that school has more than 1,100 students drawn from all parts of the Gulf region. The next opening for Choueifat was in Abu Dhabi where it began to spring roots for itself with only 422 students. Now it has more than 1,900 students drawn from many parts of the Arab World. The Abu Dhabi school was so successful that it was decided to open up another school in the United Arab Emirates. Al Ain oasis in the UAE was selected for this expansion and education at Al Ain Choueifat School kicked off in 1980 with only 90 students. Now Al Ain Choueifat has more than 400 students.

Choueifat also wanted to meet the educational needs of Children of Arabs living in the West. So a school was established at Ashwicke Hall in England in 1983 and one in Minnesota, the USA in 1985.

The issue that remains is: When are our educators going to give our private school system some more breathing space in order to function in accordance with contemporary educational guidelines? True Jordan needs to prescribe the perimeters for all institutions operating within it be the educational or even industrial. But the distinct impression that our educators are portraying to practically all our private schools is that they want to run their schools for them as well.

The public school system naturally falls under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education and it is only natural that the ministry will dictate every aspect and dimension of education in such schools. Yet private education happens to carry the burden of some 25 per cent of the student population in Jordan and this is no joke. The private schools should therefore receive more attentive ears from the Ministry of Education about their priorities and orientations since they are in effect helping them out and assuming some of their responsibilities and burdens. The least that such schools deserve is a give and take policy. Instead,

the restrictions being imposed on them are on the increase to the extent that some are seriously thinking about folding up. Text books used by such schools which happen to be painstakingly selected as among the best in the world are often rejected in favour of inferior quality text books. Even biology books are being screened out on the pretext that they promote sexual freedom at a time when the intention is to educate the young about their anatomy in order to turn them into responsible adults and fathers and mothers in the future. Many contemporary theories are banned and cannot even be discussed. In this context, I remember a famous quotation attributed to the chancellor of the University of Chicago, my alma mater, made before my time there and in the heat of the era of McCarthyism. When asked if the university is teaching courses on Communism, his answer was: "Yes, we teach communism at the campus but we also teach cancer at the medical school!"

As Jordan has a legislation for encouragement of foreign investment in industry, it is high time to have a similar law to encourage investment whether foreign or domestic, in institutions of quality education. To be sure such investments need to be supervised at all times in order to comply with public weel. Yet they need to be promoted and encouraged by giving them some breathing space. Our private schools need such minimum freedoms in order to grow and prosper. In so doing they will not only help Jordanians receive good quality education but can also attract students from the far reaches of the Middle East. Jordan can in the process prosper and become the new Lebanon of the region. And if such schools were to gear up to the needs and conditions of the region as well, then more freedom must be given to them to select text books, curricula and school breaks. Our leaders in educational pursuits are invited to intervene in this urgent matter and let their voice be heard louder and clearer before Jordan forfeits its educational place in the region forever.

Kurds misread their fortunes

By G.H. Jansen

UNDER the present circumstances it may seem a heartless thing to say but of all the many homeless, refugee peoples the least-deserving of sympathy are the Kurds. Because the Kurds are their own worst enemy and have brought much of their suffering down upon themselves. For which there are two main reasons: Unwise leaders and foolish friends.

But perhaps the main reason for Kurdish suffering can be found in the Kurdish people themselves. This is the Kurdish popular mind-set — the aspiration, the hope, the ambition that one day there will be an independent Kurdistan. That has been totally unrealistic ever since 1923 when the Allied Powers broke the promise of an independent Kurdistan which they made in 1920 in the Treaty of Sevres.

The real, the essential tragedy of the Kurds is that they are a separate people with their own identity and history and culture. They deserve independence and by their long struggles for it they have earned it. But they cannot have it and, one might almost say, they should not, have it. This is so because of their geographic location. Kurdistan would overlay quite large areas of Iraq, Turkey and Iran and these three countries will never accept the possibility of Kurdistan. That is to say, a fourth national identity that would lie athwart the lines of communications between the three existing states, over the headwaters of two great rivers vital to Turkey and Iraq (and now to Syria) and including an

area rich in oilfields.

To make the situation worse the Kurds intrude not merely on three states or three governments with their man-made frontiers, which could be changed, but they intrude on three separate peoples, Turks, Persians and Arabs, ancient peoples, with their own languages and cultures. These cannot and will not accept the superimposition on some of their territory of a fourth people and a fourth culture.

If the Kurdish people, at the widest popular level, had stopped dreaming dreams and accepted the tragic fact that, for long into the foreseeable future they would remain divided and that they would remain a minority community in three different national states under the political authority of another people, then their recent history and their present position would have been happier.

If folk wisdom did not reach that level of political maturity and wisdom it is because the unreal dreams were encouraged by short-sighted leaders and foolish foreign friends. Among the leaders there has been one exception. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, under Jalal Talabani, has the slogan, "autonomy for Kurdistan, democracy for Iraq" which puts Kurdish aspirations into a realistic context but it seems not to have made much headway against the heavy dream of independence.

Kurdish leaders, besides failing to set a realistic goal before their people, also failed to give them a united leadership, wast-

ing time and energy in internecine strife within the community (particularly the Barazani against the Talabani), while imagining that they were achieving something substantial for their own people internationally if they were able to play off one or the other of the three regimes against the other.

Perhaps because of the remoteness and isolation of the Kurdish homeland, unsophisticated Kurdish leader never seemed to grasp the realities of the big world outside. Little wonder that there is now talk within the community of replacing the leadership of the last 40 years.

The Kurds and the Iraqis are now discussing autonomy plans based on an autonomy agreement they reached in 1970. Why the waste of 21 years? Because the then leader who signed for the Kurds, their "national hero," Mulla Mustafa Barazani did not grasp the real value of what was a generous and far-sighted offer. The most significant clause in the agreement was this: article 10. A: "The people of Iraq is made up of two principal nationalities: the Arab nationality and the Kurdish nationality." The essence of the Kurdish nationalist claim was thus conceded and yet Barazani said of it: "It was all a ruse. I knew it before I even signed." The Iraqi also conceded that Kurdish was a "national language" and that a Kurdish autonomous area was to be established after four years. In 1972 Barazani retracted his 1970 signature.

One reason why he did so reveals another persistent weakness of Kurdish leadership — its dependence on foreign powers. It was the Iraqis, the Israelis and the U.S. who persuaded Barazani to reject the 1970 plan and the 1974 autonomy law just as now the Kurds are saying that they want the protection of British and U.S. troops "for ever."

The Kurds, evidently, believe they can achieve independence through dependence. The Kurds have persistently asked for control of the Kirkuk oil field area but Iraqi reluctance to concede this is understandable after Mulla Mustafa said in 1973: "We are ready to do what goes with American policy in this area if America will protect us ... If support were strong enough we could control the Kirkuk field and give it to an American company to operate."

It was sheer bad luck for Kurds and Arab Iraqis alike that in 1984 when Saddam Hussein and Jalal Talabani reached agreement on a new liberalised version of the 1970 plan, the Turkish Foreign Minister Halefoglu turned up in Baghdad and vetoed it as being too dangerously autonomous. Iraq deeply dependent on Turkey in the fourth year of the war with Iran had to comply. Such thing could happen again, and it emphasises that Turkey, not Iraq, is the main enemy of the Kurds which the Kurds, mistakenly, have not yet understood.

There is a popular Kurdish saying, "The Kurds have no friends," and yet they are still

depending on foreign "friends" who have their own national policies to pursue and who merely using the Kurds as a stick with which to beat Saddam Hussein.

This dependence has been fostered by the romantic and sentimental image of the Kurds created and publicised by foreign correspondents, especially Anglo-American ones. The Kurdish militiaman, the Peshmerga, "he who faces death," with his colourful baggy turban and cummerbund and baggy trousers and bandoliers has had an irresistible appeal to these journalists. To be with and write about these dashing, gallant fellows was an ego-trip for the correspondents, latter day avatars of Lawrence of Arabia, leading and inspiring his local cohorts. But this sort of hero worship had two bad consequences for the Kurds. It led them and their leaders to believe that the Peshmerga was a much stronger military force than it actually was and also that the Kurds were more important for the outside world than they actually were because the Kurds have never been considered anything more than a sideshow.

It was because of two grave military miscalculations of Peshmerga strength and ability that the Kurdish leaders brought on the present tragic situation. In March they thought that, after his crushing defeat in Kuwait, Saddam Hussein had been finished off militarily and that if the Peshmerga came down from their hills and captured Kurdish towns and cities, that Kurds-

tan would, at long last, be within their grasp.

It almost happened because the Peshmerga did capture many towns and cities and then behaved as guerrillas do in such circumstances: They looted and pillaged and killed their enemies out of hand. And when confronted with the superior force of the Iraqi army the Peshmerga, who were not prepared to accept death, behaved, again, like guerrillas: They did not stand and fight but pulled out back to their hills. Only this time they pulled out a large mass of untrained Kurds with them.

And now the Peshmerga, perhaps to compensate for the ignominious rout, are bullying their own people, behaving towards the refugees with cruelty and greed. Indeed the Kurdish people, and especially their political leaders, will have to be vigilant not to suffer the same fate as the Lebanese who supported their militias only to wake up one day to find that the undisciplined young men with guns had become their new masters.

An accommodation with Baghdad on an autonomous area without foreign protection within a democratic Iraq would be by far the best outcome for the Kurds. And, considering the mistakes they have made in the past, they should count themselves very lucky to get it.

Godfrey Jansen writes for several international publications on the Middle East out of Cyprus. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

U.S. faces question of what next in Middle East

By Alan Elsner
Reuter

WASHINGTON — After three Middle East peace missions by Secretary of State James Baker, the United States faces the question: what next?

Baker plunged into Middle East diplomacy declaring there was a "window of opportunity." The U.S.-led victory in the Gulf war, he reasoned, had shaken up the region and might make the combatants of the decades-old Arab-Israeli conflict rethink long-held positions and seek new compromises.

So far, there is little if any evidence that this is so. In fact, the leaders of Israel and most Arab countries seem to prefer the status quo of neither peace nor war to the prospect of taking political risk for peace.

"Regrettably, the problems of the Middle East will not yield to the quick fixes which some have proposed, and in fact we face a longer road than we did in repelling the Iraqi threat to Saudi Arabia and reversing the effects of aggression in Kuwait," said David Mack, deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs.

Israeli Arabs affairs commentator Ehud Ya'ari told a Washington seminar recently that what the Middle East had was not so much a window as a tunnel of opportunity — a long, black tunnel through which leaders would have to stoop and crawl, getting

scratched and bruised along the way in search of an uncertain light at the other end.

Tahseen Basheer, a veteran Egyptian diplomat and retired ambassador, told the same seminar that Baker had met the age-old attitude of Arabs and Israelis both wanting the other side to make all the compromises.

"The Arabs want the Americans to pressure Israel. The Israelis want the American government to pressure the Saudis and the Syrians," he said.

It is becoming increasingly clear that most sides to a potential peace process, including Israel, Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, emerged from the Gulf war as winners, their security enhanced by the defeat of Iraq.

"The parties on the winning side of the Gulf war feel streng-

thened and are thus probably less likely to make concessions," said Samuel Lewis, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel, who now heads a Middle East peace studies group.

The Palestinians, who emerged from the war as losers, were the exception. It is probably no accident that they have been the most forthcoming to Baker's initiative, the keenest to get negotiations going on virtually any terms.

Lewis said past Middle East peace efforts had only succeeded when leaders realised that it was impossible to sustain the status quo.

"There has to be enough sense of pain involved in the status quo so that the risk of staying with the status quo exceeds the risks of potential concessions," he said.

Who, apart from the Palesti-

nians, does that apply to in the Middle East today?

Not the Saudis, who have retreated into their shell and do not even want to come to a Middle East peace conference.

Not the Syrians, who see scant prospect of Israel giving them back the Golan Heights, which it captured in 1967 and regards as essential to its security.

And not the Israelis, who see a process designed only for them to make risky concessions and withdraw from territory which many in the ruling Likud Party regard as given to them by God.

The one potential incentive for Israel to go along was largely removed when the Saudis dropped out of the process. Sitting around a table with the Saudis held out the prospect of Israel gaining acceptance from the entire Islamic world. With that gone, what is left?

The one avenue forward for the United States probably lies in intensifying the pain quotient associated with the status quo. That translates into the time-honoured tactic of putting greater pressure on Israel.

In fact, circumstances have placed Israel in a state of dire economic vulnerability. Hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews are flooding into a country which has no housing or jobs to give them.

Only the United States can inject the massive funds needed to deal with the growing social problems which are bound to be

associated with such a vast immigration flow.

This is a potential lever which Baker will probably have to use if he is to continue his efforts.

So far, Baker has walked softly in the Middle East. If he has a big stick, he has kept it well-hidden. That will have to change if he is to have any chance of success.

LETTERS

It takes two...

To the Editor:

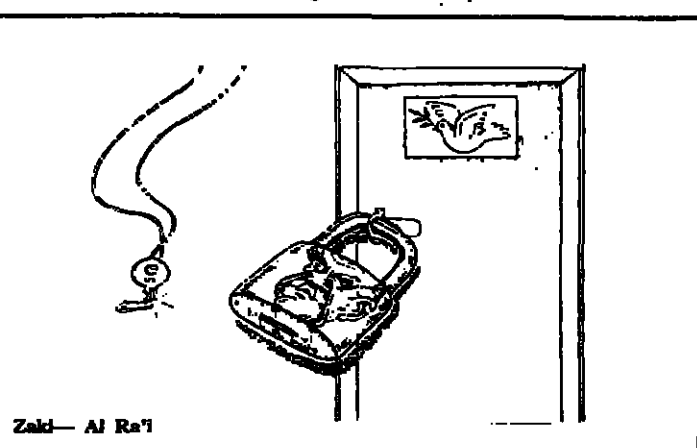
THE victims of Bangladesh's worst cyclone till Friday — as reported by the media — were 100,000 people. Earthquakes in Soviet Georgia have killed hundreds of people. In the rest of impoverished countries all over the world people die in their struggle against nature for survival and in order to make out a better living out of their limited resources.

In our "dear" Arab World, we too fight nature but in our own special way, that no one, not even we ourselves, can understand. Our brothers in Lebanon fight, Iraq invaded Kuwait, people in Sudan fight.

In both cases, people fight, but the difference is that in the first case you feel pity for some people whose only fault is to be in those catastrophic parts of the world. You also feel shame for standing helplessly just watching them face their fate. In the other case, you feel disgust from people looking for different ways by which to destroy themselves, in claim of search for a better living. You feel disgust for people living in the margin of civilisation after being at the peak for centuries.

As the proverb says "It takes two to make a quarrel," consequently I say "It takes two to stop the quarrel." So let us all forget our fights, and hope for the best to come for our nation; let us all work together to overcome our difficulties and achieve our goals for "the darkest time is that before dawn."

Abir M. Shahin
Amman



King

(Continued from page 1)

people to decide if they wanted a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation or a separate team.

Well-informed analysts, who are close to both sides, said that Jordan and the PLO were not ready at this stage to delve into details unless there were signs that there will be a serious peace process.

"The U.S. is not offering anything concrete or new. What we care about is substance and so far there has been no serious talks about an effective conference that will be based on the principle of swapping land for peace," said one PLO official.

The analysts said that Jordan and the PLO saw no point in a meeting if there was no mechanism which would make the United Nations resolutions to solve the Israeli-Arab conflict binding. The sources added that just as Security Council resolutions on the Gulf crisis were enforced, many Arabs are expecting the same to be applied to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

King Hussein stressed the importance of adherence to international legitimacy when holding such a conference or when discussing any peaceful settlement to the issue, Petra reported.

Meanwhile, Palestinian sources denied a report in the local press that the PLO was trying to revive the 1985 accord which involved an agreement on a future Jordanian-Palestinian confederation.

The report in Al Dustour daily quoted PLO Executive Committee member Mohammad Milhem as saying that the "(1985) Amman accord could be the basis for a permanent joint Jordanian-Palestinian strategy."

In a telephone interview with the Jordan Times, Milhem said that this was his personal view. "I expressed my view and the view of the independents in the PLO," Milhem said.

But the PLO official said that he was not calling for the revival of the Amman accord. "What I meant was that we can build on it and develop it in accordance with the post-Gulf war development in order to formulate a joint permanent Jordanian-Palestinian strategy," he said.

Milhem expressed the opinion that it was time for both sides to formulate a permanent strategy "instead of reaching accords that get annulled or changed after one or two years."

According to analysts, Milhem's statement partly reflects dismay among some independents in the organisation who feel that they were excluded or were not represented in the Jordanian-Palestinian talks.

The three-man delegation, which arrived in Jordan, included representatives of Fateh, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestinian Communist Party.

In the past, the Palestinian groups — and sometimes even Fateh — opposed previous accords with Jordan.

But over the last two years the attitude of these groups have shifted in favour of closer coordination with Jordan.

Other PLO officials dismissed allegations that independents were excluded since all the delegation members were in Amman as PLO Executive Committee members rather than groups' representatives.

Last week, Fateh Central Committee member Khaled Hassan provoked a controversy by renewing his calls — first made in 1984 — for marginalising the role of the Palestinian groups and giving a bigger say to the independents.

Hassan has reportedly repeated his proposal during a recent session of the PLO Central Council (PCC), but apparently his call did not receive Chairman Arafat's blessings.

The talks were attended by Royal Court Chief Sheriff Zeid Ben Shaker and King Hussein's Political Advisor Adnan Abu Odeh.

The PLO delegation headed by Mahmoud Abbas, also included Abed Rabo, Suleiman Najab and Palestine ambassador to Jordan Tayyeb Abdul Rahim.

Kuwait

(Continued from page 1)

Jordanian papers since the U.S.-led allied forces were able to free Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.

A report by the London-based The Independent newspaper revealed on April 27 that American government officials held a secret meeting with Kuwait's crown prince last month and confronted him with evidence that one of his own sons and a nephew had been involved in the organisation of death squads that were torturing and killing Palestinian civilians in the emirate. The report quoted U.S. officials as saying that a special

American investigating team had revealed substantial evidence of torture and listed 350 Palestinians as still missing and feared dead at the hands of the Kuwaitis.

The Kuwaitis, the Americans also discovered, deliberately tried to mislead the U.S. task force by quietly trucking Palestinian prisoners, for whom Americans were looking, across the border into Iraq in buses painted with the symbol of the Red Crescent humanitarian relief organisation.

The stories of torture of Palestinians came into the light when reporters from The Observer newspaper and The Independent rescued a Palestinian boy who was being beaten by Kuwaiti soldiers under the eyes of U.S. special forces unit in the Hawalli district of Kuwait City. The scene was filmed by BBC television.

A military complex called Geewan (G-1) has been named as one of the main centres of torture of Palestinians.

A Palestinian who was held there by Kuwaiti forces described it as the "road to true suffering."

GCC

(Continued from page 1)

(Iraq's) invasion of Kuwait uncovered loopholes in our defence," Al Khater said in opening the meeting.

The GCC foreign ministers reached an agreement shortly after the Gulf war ended that calls for Syria and Egypt to provide the core of a permanent Gulf security force. Bishara said the council members planned to meet in Cairo to flesh out the plan.

Rafsanjani

(Continued from page 1)

accord that ended their 8-year war, the official Iraqi News Agency reported.

Iraq said 40 people from Iran attacked Iraqi forward units along the southern border with mortars and light machine guns. It demanded that the U.N. take action to stop the violations.

Bush

(Continued from page 1)

treatment is going very well," Fitzwater said. "His condition is quite normal. You can never predict how long this sort of thing takes. It's just a matter of being patient and waiting for it (the medicine) to take effect."

White House Chief of Staff John H. Sununu visited Bush at the military hospital and later said Bush was "fine."

"He's getting cantankerous. He wants to get out today, right now," said Sununu, who brought the president some routine paperwork.

The first lady Barbara told reporters Bush "looks fabulous," as she left the hospital Sunday morning for a brief trip to the White House.

Doctors prescribed Digoxin to regulate Bush's heartbeat, and Fitzwater said a second medication, Procainamide, was also prescribed.

"They just added the other drug, Procainamide, which essentially does the same thing (as Digoxin) only from a different angle, if you will...just smooths out the heartbeat," Fitzwater said.

Fitzwater said Bush was eager to leave the hospital.

An insult to humanity

ON Jan. 28, 1991, the World Campaign for the Protection of Victims of War was launched worldwide in a series of press conferences. The Campaign will culminate on May 8 — World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day — with a chain of light around the world. The Campaign has three main objectives: (1) to draw attention to the plight of thousands of war victims; (2) to promote knowledge of and respect for international humanitarian law; (3) to spur governments and the general public to ensure that all victims of war receive the protection and assistance to which they are entitled. The article is reprinted from the magazine of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

By George Reid

LAUNCHING the World Campaign for the Protection of War Victims in Geneva on Jan. 28, 1991, Princess Christina of Sweden said that the suffering of victims of war had reached such proportions that their condition was "an insult to humanity."

"Millions of people live daily under the dark clouds of war and armed conflict," she continued. "They face death, imprisonment, separation from their families, and are forced to leave their homes or countries. In such a situation, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement cannot remain silent."

"For 127 years we have been bringing humanity to the battlefield. Today, with the ending of the cold war, the world has great hopes of real peace. But the war in the Gulf and events in that region and many others show just how fragile the peace process is. The Movement must therefore redouble its efforts to ensure that all victims of war today receive the protection and assistance to which they are entitled under international law. It is our duty to light their darkness."

The Campaign for Protection of the Victims of War concentrate specifically on the plight of civilians caught in the crossfire of armed conflict. In the World War I, they amounted to 15 per cent of war victims. In the World War II to 65 per cent. Today, they are 90 per cent. Of course, those figures do not take into account the Gulf.

War has changed

In general terms, the increase of civilian casualties has two major reasons. First, the nature of warfare has changed. At the battle of Solferino, which gave birth to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the enemy was the soldier in the army of the other side. He was clearly visible: only a bayonet or sabre length away. He fought, in uniform, for a hostile state. The lines were clear. Today, however, the vast majority of armed conflicts take place inside states, not between states.



An Afghan child injured by a mine (Gamma-Denis Charlot)

But, in internal conflicts, the lines are often not clear. The roads often belong to government forces by day and to insurgents by night. Fighting can erupt suddenly in the cities, only to die down equally quickly and re-emerge hundreds of kilometres away. Often, the combatants wear no uniform.

In such situations, it is difficult for civilians to stand aside. They may be attacked simply for belonging to a different ethnic or religious group. They may simply be too well educated. In guerrilla wars, they are often seen as "the water in which the fish swim": the supporters of rebel forces who supply them with food and shelter. "Innocence" is a difficult concept for men fighting a vicious war," Peter Oryme, Secretary of the Uganda Red Cross, told the Victims of War Colloquium in Geneva in February 1989. "Too often they see little boys as spies who climb up trees to watch their movements. And they suspect every woman of having hand-grenades in their bundles of firewood."

More powerful weapons

The second main reason for the increased number of civilian casualties is the use of mass destructive means and methods of warfare. It is difficult now to understand the shock-waves which shook Europe when Zeppelin airships attacked England in 1915. The civilian casualties were small, but a precedent had been set for indiscriminate bombing in Spain, Ethiopia and China during the thirties, and the world over in the World War II, culminating in the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The World War II's tactics of "blitzkrieg" (lightning war) also made it difficult for civilians to escape the fighting. The sheer speed of advance by mechanised groundforces, coupled with air attacks in rear areas, inevitably led to a high death-toll among non-combatants.

In the World War I, over 65,000,000 were mobilised. More than 9,700,000 were killed — 1,374,000 of them civilians. In the

World War II over 107,000,000 people were mobilised. More than 51,000,000 were killed — 34,000,000 of them civilians.

Not all civilians were accidentally killed by bombings or being caught in cross fires. Six million Jews were exterminated in World War II for being Jewish, as were others of various faiths and political beliefs.

Today there are new terrors for civilians caught in the crossfire. They may be bombed from a great height by planes they can barely see. They may be sprayed with chemical weapons. They may be the unwitting target of the euphemistically named "fire and forget" generation of missiles, launched at distance from which visual identification is impossible.

The development of small-calibre weapons firing high velocity bullets has also led to an inevitable rise in the death toll. Historian John Keegan graphically describes these weapons as "the transistor radio of modern warfare," and comments: "The weak, too, can now participate in the killing."

Modern anti-personnel mines, scattered at random, have also brought their grim toll of war victims — often years after the end of hostilities. Millions of hectares in Poland were mined during World War II. In the ensuing 35 years, over 4,000 civilians (the majority children) were killed by them, and a further 8,700 seriously injured. In Libya, which was also extensively mined, an official report concluded: "For years, these explosive remnants of war have had an enormously adverse effect. There have been thousands of direct human tragedies in the form of deaths and maimings. They have also greatly exacerbated existing burdens of hunger and poverty."

Today, anti-personnel mines are the norm on many contemporary battlefields such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Mozambique. In Afghanistan alone, the United Nations estimates that 30 million were sown during hostilities: posing a deadly threat to refugees who return home. Some of the mines inevitably attract children. "Butterfly" mines are easy to pick up. "They don't blow off your foot," one British war surgeon comments cynically. "They blow you off at the buttocks."

And mines are increasingly made of plastic. They are cheap and easy to mass produce. They are difficult to clear during hostilities. What's more, the resulting wounds are difficult to treat since plastic shrapnel embedded in the body is virtually impossible to detect with X-rays.

Driven from home and country

Such horrors have led to a vast movements of people since 1945, both inside and outside of national boundaries. Today, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are some ten million internally displaced persons in Africa alone, and possibly as many as 20 million in the whole world. "My name is Abuk," one of the displaced told a UNHCR official. "My husband went away to find work, but was killed in the war. I was captured by some armed men and forced to marry one of them. I ran away to Khartoum. I try to make a living selling peanuts, but it doesn't bring enough to look after my



Civilians run for shelter during rocket attack in Lebanon (Gamma-Karen Daher)

children."

In addition to people displaced inside their own country, UNHCR estimates that there are over 14.5 million refugees forced to flee abroad. The great majority of these have gone because of armed conflict. "My name is Maria," one 70-year-old woman told a Red Cross worker in a Malawi camp. "I was stolen by bandits. They took me from my vegetable patch, and for two years I have to carry and cook for them in the bush. I don't know where my family is."

For such people, wounds are not necessarily physical. Mental pain and anguish stay with them

for the rest of their lives. "My name is Lazarus," one of the estimated 200,000 "child soldiers" in the world today, told film-maker Gilles de Mestre. "I am 12 and I make war. Later, I want to be a little boy again."

In Beirut a relief worker writes of children staying by the side of their dead parents, unable to speak, eat or play. "Their traumas," he comments, "show up in their play. One four-year-old, who had witnessed the stabbing of her father, played repetitively at stabbing her doll..."

Man's inhumanity to man "It is time" said Princess

Christina "for such realities of modern warfare to be more widely known. Man's inhumanity to his fellow man must be discussed. As long as we don't live in a world where law and justice have definitely replaced wars, it is the responsibility of our Movement to speak up for the victims, and to strive constantly to bring them the protection and assistance which is their right. The message of this campaign to all governments, combatants and men and women of goodwill everywhere is 'clear; help the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to help them.'"

He got in the way of somebody's war.



Nine out of ten casualties in modern warfare are civilians. The vast majority are children.

In the so-called "post-war" period since 1945, at least 20 million people have died in over 100 conflicts. A further 60 million have been wounded, imprisoned, separated from their families and forced to flee their homes or their countries.

In over 30 armed conflicts, this human misery is happening now. Yet the Geneva Conventions — ratified by 164 states — lay down clear rules that all victims of war living under the darkness of conflict must be respected.

They have the right to protection from murder, torture, starvation and being taken hostage. To focus attention on the plight of millions of civilians caught in the crossfire, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is launching a worldwide campaign to ensure that they get the protection and assistance to which they are entitled under international law. No matter who. No matter where. No matter when.

We call on governments and combatants everywhere to respect the rights of all victims who get in the way of somebody's war. Help us to help them.



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F.W. de Klerk

S. Africa to sell off oil reserves

CAPE TOWN (R) — South Africa has decided to reduce its strategic oil reserves to raise up to two billion rand (\$770 million) to stimulate the economy and create jobs, President F.W. de Klerk has said.

He said Economic Cooperation Minister Dawie de Villiers would head a committee to consider projects to be financed by the cash injection resulting from the gradual relaxation of international anti-apartheid sanctions.

"Sanctions and threats of sanctions have obliged South Africa to invest a portion of its savings in strategic reserves, including oil. Obviously this is a very unproductive form of investment that has contributed to the unfavourable course of economic growth and job creation," he said.

"South Africa's relations with the rest of the world have improved to such an extent, however, that it has now been decided to lower the strategic reserves as far as oil is concerned," he added.

De Klerk said at least one billion rand (\$385 million) would become available after allocations to cover "energy-related projects" already approved by the government.

This appeared to refer to the financing of the government's 8.8 billion rand (\$3.4 billion) offshore oil-from-gas project, which is under construction at Mossel Bay.

"Depending on how South Africa's relations with the rest of the world normalise and strategic reserves can be reduced towards internationally accepted levels, this amount could rise to a maximum of two billion rand," he said.

South Africa, which has no known reserves of crude oil, began to build up a strategic reserve when Western governments started to impose sanctions in the 1970s.

The project was covered by laws that still allow for heavy fines or imprisonment for anyone trying to penetrate the wall of secrecy surrounding South Africa's energy supplies.

The country has pioneered the commercial extraction of fuel from coal and an extensive search for oil has yielded marginal offshore gas supplies. But South Africa still depends on imports for most of its energy needs.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

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Central Bank official rates		
U.S. dollar	Buy	Sell
Pound Sterling	1154.7	1161.6
Deutsche mark	389.7	392.0
Swiss franc	461.9	464.7
French franc	115.2	115.9
Japanese yen (for 100)	491.2	494.1
Dutch guilder	345.8	347.9
Swedish crown	109.9	110.6
Italian lira (for 100)	52.7	53.0
Belgian franc (for 10)	189.8	190.9

Business failures rise by 51% in U.S.

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. business failures increased by 54 per cent in the first quarter, the biggest rise in seven years, Dun and Bradstreet Corp. reported.

The business research company said services and retail trade suffered the worst, which is typical during a recession. Dun and Bradstreet said 20,811 businesses failed in the first quarter, compared with 13,577 in the first quarter of 1990.

"Every region and every major industry sector, with the exception of mining, posted a sizable increase in failures in the first quarter," said Joseph Duncan, Dun and Bradstreet's corporate economist.

Failures in the services sector jumped 58.7 per cent to 5,437 from 3,425 a year earlier. Retail trade failures increased 32.5 per cent to 4,109 from 3,101.

Many business service companies failed as large companies cut back on use of outside firms, Duncan said.

Financial services and real estate companies continued to fall victim to a depressed real estate economy, which figured prominently in the failure of 1,256 companies, a 43 per cent rise from a year earlier.

Construction companies posted a 48 per cent rise in failures, with 2,849 firms going under in the

first quarter.

More than 1,300 business failed in New England, more than double the first quarter and the biggest rise in any region. Duncan said more business bankruptcies were reported in the first quarter of 1991 in New England than in all of 1990.

Elsewhere in the country, business failures rose 82.3 per cent to 2,592 in the Middle Atlantic region; 62.4 per cent to 3,589 in the south Atlantic region; 82.5 per cent to 4,099 in the Pacific region and 50 per cent to 1,459 in the mountain region.

Doug Handler, a Dun and Bradstreet economist, said a more sobering statistic is the level of net liabilities — the amount of money owed to creditors and other economic losses resulting from the failures.

Handler said net liabilities for the first quarter totalled \$29.6 billion.

"You can imagine the extent that the bad debt is hurting the economy," Handler said.

Dun and Bradstreet defines failures as businesses that have ceased operations following bankruptcy or assignment, closed and left money owed to creditors, were involved in receivership, reorganisation or arrangement, or voluntarily compromised with creditors.

Soviet miners cautious on return to work

MOSCOW (R) — Militant Siberian coal miners vowed Sunday to continue a crippling strike until the Soviet government formally approved the transfer of the troubled industry to the control of Boris Yeltsin's Russian Republic.

A spokesman for the regional strike committee in the Kuzbass coalfields said strike leaders would meet next Tuesday to debate the Kremlin's transfer offer, originally scheduled for signing Sunday.

But there were signs the deal could be delayed in Moscow, dampening hopes for a quick end to the nine-week strike that has cost the industry more than 7.5 million tonnes in lost production.

"We are waiting for the final document. When they sign it, we will discuss conditions under which we will resume work," said a strike committee spokesman from Kemerovo, administrative centre of the giant Kuzbass coalfield.

Russia's strike-hit coal fields have emerged as a crucial battleground between Yeltsin — demanding greater republican control of valuable resources — and his arch-rival Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

The strike committee spokesman said reports reaching the

miners from Moscow suggested the central government was seeking major changes in the transfer order, with its signing possibly being delayed until mid-May.

Strike leader Vyacheslav Golikov, who worked closely with Yeltsin on the proposal, flew to Moscow Sunday to help work out the final text, he said.

About 66 coal enterprises, including 51 pits, remained on strike throughout the Kuzbass, the country's biggest coal producer. Eleven of 13 pits in Arctic city of Vorkuta were also on strike.

Miners in the Ukrainian Donbass coalfield called off their strike at the weekend and all but three pits were reported working Sunday.

Mineworkers downed tools to support a variety of economic and political demands, ranging from higher wages to Gorbachev's resignation.

But most Siberian miners now say transfer to the control of the Russian Federation — under the popular Yeltsin — would give them enough autonomy to improve conditions on their own.

A spokesman for the Soviet Council of Ministers, meanwhile, said his office had no information on the planned protocol which would turn the mines over to Russia.

British payments gap widens

LONDON (R) — Britain's current account balance of payments deficit last month was almost double what it was in February, official figures showed.

The widening gap led some economists to predict that trade performance would continue to haunt the Conservative government, even as the economy begins a recovery from recession. The government must call a general election no later than mid-1992.

Separately, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Norman Lamont, predicted in a speech that the recovery would start "albeit relatively slowly at first" in the second half of 1991.

The trade figures were announced by the government's

Central Statistical Office which said the current account balance of payments deficit widened to £432 million (\$735 million) in March.

That compared with £227 million (\$385 million) in February. The February figure, however, was considered refreshingly low. Imports of oil and of gems and aircraft were sharply down in that month.

A rebound in imports during March was partly the result of a sharp jump in purchases of these so-called "erratics" and a drop of £100 million (\$170 million) in their sales.

Even so, the rise in the trade gap was slightly bigger than economists had predicted.

Coca-Cola removed from Arab boycott list

DAMASCUS (R) — The Arab League's boycott of Israel Office has removed the Coca-Cola company and nine other firms from its list of organisations to be shunned for their dealings with the Zionist state, officials said Sunday.

They said the office's 64th meeting, which ended in Damascus Saturday, added to the list 110 companies including 104 in which it said British media magnate Robert Maxwell had shares.

The boycott office was set up in the 1950s to isolate Israel economically by banning dealings with any companies which — directly or indirectly — supported the Zionist state economically or militarily.

Other U.S.-based companies removed from the list were the J.B. Williams Co., Helen Curtis International S.A. and the Home Insurance Company.

Also taken off the list were Phoenix Assurance PLC of Britain, Royal Baking Industries Van Leer B.V. of the Netherlands, Lanitis Bros Ltd. of Cyprus, Europa Metall LMT SPA of Italy, Naniwa Kogyosho Co. Ltd. of Japan, and Scott and English Ltd. of Singapore.

The boycott office said in a statement that eight international companies were cleared after investigation.

These were: Atlantic Computers PLC and United Distillers Co., both of Britain, Kleber Industrie of France, Interoma West SPA of Italy, B.V. Beta of the Netherlands, Chiyoda Corp of Japan and the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd. of Australia.

The statement did not identify the 104 companies added to the list because of share-holdings by Maxwell, whose interests in Israel include the Jerusalem Post newspaper.

It identified the six other firms added to the boycott list as: Codorniu S.A. and T.H.M. control Electronico Integrado, both of Spain, the U.S.-based Lelco Products Inc. and Phoenix Ware, STE. Sodipneu of France, and Stollwerck of Germany.

The statement said companies or trade names remaining on the list included: Kirin Engineering Co. Ltd. of Japan, Westburg B.V. of the Netherlands, Aako Danmark APSG Elma Chemical Ltd. of Denmark, the trade mark "Iridium" owned by U.S.-based Motorola Inc., and 59 branches of the British company Courtaulds PLC.

The boycott office's decisions are not binding on individual Arab states, which must pass legislation to implement them.

World Bank looks for new ideas

WASHINGTON (R) — The global credit crunch and the current enthusiasm for the private sector are bringing about a sea-change in the way the World Bank does business.

In its continuing effort to alleviate poverty, the bank is putting less emphasis on lending levels and more on the search for the elusive ingredients of successful development — why, for example, Yemen has a life expectancy of 51 while that of Sri Lanka, with an almost identical per capita income, is 70.

"Since there will not be much development money over the next decade, there had better be a lot of good ideas," World Bank chief economist Lawrence Summers said.

Between 1975 and 1980 the World Bank transferred \$9 to each person in the developing world. In the next five years the figure will be just over \$2.

Summers said that using resources effectively was more important than investing more heavily. Boosting the overall productivity of the developing world by just two-tenths of one per cent

would do more for living standards than investing \$100 billion of capital, he said.

The engine of productivity, growth, according to the new thinking, will be the private sector. The days of five-year government plans and big spending on state projects are gone.

Because commercial banks are not about to resume the heavy lending of the 1970s that gave them so much grief in the 1980s, officials say the task of the World Bank must be to help developing countries attract their share of equity flows.

"It has become increasingly evident that private initiative and competitive markets play a critical role in fostering dynamic economic growth, development and poverty alleviation," Barber Conable, the bank's president, said.

Conable, responding to pressure from the United States, is assigning more bank staff to private-sector initiatives but is resisting Washington's push to have the bank earmark 50 per cent of its lending to promote the private sector by 1995.

If the bank is turning more to free enterprise it is out of pragmatism and not out of messianic faith in capitalism.

Ismail Serageldin, technical director in the bank's Africa Department, said that under the best of cases the state sector would be able to create only 40 million of the minimum 240 million jobs the continent will need in the next thirty years.

"This is not a Reaganite, Thatcherite reflex. This is not the World Bank waving a banner," Serageldin said. "It is the uncompromising logic of numbers."

The bank is decidedly not turning its back on public works "It's important to qualify the enthusiasm for the private sector," said Barbara Herz, division chief in the bank's Population and Human Resources Department.

"Firms need a healthy, educated workforce, and that means room for public-sector investment," she said.

The bank is moving ineluctably into sensitive areas such as the role of women in Muslim countries, the level of military spending and the accountability of gov-

ernment.

Herz gave the example of a recent \$200 million education loan to Bangladesh, where a shortage of woman teachers has curbed primary-education opportunities for girls. To remedy that, the bank laid down the novel condition that 60 per cent of the teachers hired for the project be women.

The bank's charter requires it to make loan decisions on economic, not political grounds, and in any case the evidence is that growth proceeds, on average, at about the same rate in democratic and non-democratic regimes.

Although it is not about to prescribe what form of government its borrowers should have, the bank is already banging the drum for good government — basics such as the rule of law and transparent decision-making.

"The quality of governance is absolutely central to the development process," Serageldin said. "We've told many governments that there's no way you're going to get foreign investment if you have no investment code."

IMF to keep up attack on heavy military spending

PARIS (R) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is finishing a study that shows Gulf states could save \$30 billion a year by cutting military spending to the international average, a senior monetary official has said.

The wastefulness of military spending was a theme of the semi-annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank, and IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus hopes the report, to be released in the coming weeks, will keep up pressure for cuts.

Countries spend an average of five per cent of their gross domestic product on arms. In 10 Gulf states, the average is 13 per cent, the official said.

Diverting government spending from arms to development would help boost living standards in the Middle East, where per capita income has failed to rise in the past decade, the official said.

And by relieving some of the burden on Western countries of

post-Gulf war reconstruction, it could free money to be spent in the developing world countries that Camdessus and World Bank President Barber Conable expressed last week were echoed by British Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont.

"Too many countries are still spending more than they can afford on military hardware," Lamont said in Washington. "All too often it brings with it also a dangerous accumulation of debt for financing of purchases which offer no economic return."

And former World Bank President Robert McNamara went so far as to suggest international lending agencies give priority to countries which spend less than two per cent of gross national product on the military.

Despite the indignation, Camdessus faces an uphill struggle. The United States has announced big arms sales to the Gulf since the war ended, and Brazil is



Norman Lamont

leading a fight by Third World arms exporters to head off what it sees as extra loan conditionality.

Arms spending — or more accurately, arms smuggling — is getting Camdessus's attention for another reason. Along with drug trafficking and tax havens, he sees it as a contributory factor to the huge black hole in the global balance of payments.

Camdessus has asked former Belgian National Bank governor Jean Godeaux to carry out a new study into errors and omissions in the world's current account, estimated at \$50 billion.

Taiwan's foreign currency reserves soar

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan's foreign currency reserves have surged above \$76 billion and the island now has the largest reserves in the world, the cabinet's Council for Economic Planning and Development has said.

The reserves have expanded rapidly since the third quarter of last year and have risen by \$10 billion in a little over six months, the council said in a statement.

Economists attribute the rise to a recovery in Taiwan's export trade and a flow of speculative funds returning to the island after leaving during last year's stock market crash.

The council said Japan's foreign currency reserves, formerly the world's largest, had dropped to under \$70 billion.

The record total for Taiwan's currency reserves is \$76.7 billion, hit at the end of 1987. The reserves were \$75.6 billion in February this year.

The council said that although excessive reserves could strain Taiwan's monetary system, they would help the island embark on huge infrastructure projects this year.

Analysts expect Canadian manufacturing slide to deepen

OTTAWA (R) — Canada's recession-hit manufacturing sector is shrinking rapidly, the government has reported and economists expect to see more weakness before the economy bottoms out.

Shipments by Canadian manufacturers dropped by 1.5 per cent in January from December, the third straight monthly decrease, Statistics Canada said.

The government agency said

Canadian factories ran at 74 per cent of capacity in the fourth quarter of 1990, down 4.6 per cent from the third quarter. This was the largest single-quarter drop since the 1982 recession.

"The manufacturing sector has not hit bottom yet in the current recession," said Patti Croft, an economist with Burns Fry Ltd. (The numbers) show this is a broadly based recession."

Economists say the manufac-

turing sector, which makes up 20 per cent of the economy, has been hit by high interest rates that cut investment

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Stench of death hangs over cyclone-hit Bangladesh port

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh (R) — The stench of death hung over Bangladesh's main port Sunday as survivors of a powerful cyclone and tidal wave that killed more than 125,000 people struggled against hunger and disease.

Hundreds of victims sat forlornly holding out tin pots and plates for a handout of fried rice at a camp set up near the city's ruined airport.

Jashim Uddin told reporters he lost three sons and a daughter when a six-metre (20-foot) tidal wave driven by 145 mile an hour (233 kph) winds swept away everything in its path last Monday.

"We ran to some high ground on the road and hung on to a tree. My wife held the baby and we all hung to that tree when the water smashed into us," said Uddin, a 30-year-old rickshaw puller.

"When it was over my three children were gone and the baby had drowned," he said in a choked voice.

Police said more than 3,000 bodies were found near the airport alone after the tidal surge subsided.

Officials fear 80,000 people may have died in Chittagong district, most by drowning. The overall tally from the cyclone, the most severe in Bangladesh's formidable history of catastrophes, could exceed 150,000, they said.

Up to 10 million people — almost a tenth of the country's population of 115 million — were made homeless by the storm that battered the densely populated coast for nine hours Monday night.

In Chittagong, airport buildings and an adjacent military air base near the mouth of the Karnaphuli River were a shambles.

At least 11 military planes, including Chinese-made fighters, were at the air base and most appeared to be badly damaged.

A few kilometres away in the main harbour, a navy missile boat had turned turtle. The harbour

was clogged with at least 10 large sunken vessels, including two navy tugboats, preventing supply ships from leaving for offshore islands hit hard by the storm.

A nearby row of reinforced concrete electricity poles snapped like toothpicks in the cyclone.

Farther up the Karnaphuli River amid the pervasive smell of decomposing bodies, farmers spread thousands of sacks of wet rice, lentils and wheat on the road to dry.

Lambs and calves, their pastures now inundated with salt water, nibbled at the grain.

A new bridge over the Karnaphuli had its mid-section torn out when a barge driven up-river by the tidal wave was flung against it.

Fishing boats were tossed like discarded bath toys into the ruined rice paddies.

Hospitals are preparing for an onslaught of infectious diseases among people already weakened by hunger and a lack of drinking water, officials said.

"Cholera, gastro-enteritis, diarrhoea are going to be big problems for us," said Ermad-Ul-Haque, a doctor at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital, where the wards overflow with the injured.

Six days after the cyclone, many of the islands off Chittagong remain inaccessible because of bad weather and communications.

Officials say the death toll could go up sharply when contact is established.

"We are having considerable difficulty getting supplies to the affected areas because the communications network is still down," Robin Needham, assistant country director of the charity Care, told reporters Saturday.

"It's like sending people into the void."

A trawler hired by Care to take relief supplies to Hatiya Island sank in bad weather Friday and a local Care employee is still missing, he said. Care workers said up to 12,000 people may have died in the island.

Despite its poverty Bangladesh, fated by geography to endure catastrophic cyclones, floods and famine, has an extraordinary resilience to fall back on, said Needham, who has worked in the country since 1972.

"Life in all of Bangladesh is very tough even in the best of times," he said. "The coping mechanism of people is much stronger than we give them credit for."

Meanwhile, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, bringing urgently-needed relief aid for millions of Bangladeshi cyclone victims, said Sunday the disaster was "a tragedy with few parallels."

"Millions of our brothers and sisters have been rendered homeless. Hundreds of thousands of them have lost their lives. Many more have lost their possessions."

"It is a tragedy with few parallels," he said at the airport after arriving on his first visit to Bangladesh since becoming prime minister late last year.

Sharif brought with him two badly-needed helicopters to supplement the six that Bangladesh is using to drop supplies to the islands, home to hundreds of thousands of people.

He also brought rice, cloth, medicine, food and tents. He promised there would be more to come.

Sharif was due to meet Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, elected only two months ago, before returning to Islamabad Sunday night.

"I wish that this meeting, our first since our elections as head of our respective governments, had taken place in happier circumstances," Sharif said. "Here is a task that is Herculean."

Bangladesh, formerly the province of East Pakistan, became independent in 1971 after a war between Pakistan and India.

The World Food Programme



Nawaz Sharif

will give 21,000 tonnes of food aid to the cyclone victims, the U.N. organisation said in a statement from Rome.

The United Nations has asked the international community to do everything possible to help survivors.

The U.N. Disaster Relief Office in Geneva said in a statement at the weekend that cash aid was urgently needed since relief items could be bought locally but survivors who have lost all they own were unable to pay.

Saudi Arabia said Friday it would send about \$100 million in aid to help restore Bangladesh's public services. The United States has pledged \$20 million.

Australia will give 250,000 dollars (\$195,000) in aid to victims of the Bangladesh cyclone, Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans said.

He said officials were deciding the most appropriate form for the assistance, but that emergency shelter, food and medicine for displaced people would take priority.

"It is clear there has been massive loss of life and damage to property," Evans said in a statement.

Australia has provided 50,000 tonnes of wheat for Bangladesh over the last month as part of relief unrelated to the cyclone.

Pact with Gorbachev is victory for all republics — Yeltsin

MOSCOW (R) — Russian leader Boris Yeltsin has presented an unexpected accord with President Mikhail Gorbachev last month as a victory for the 15 Soviet republics over the Kremlin.

In an unscheduled television interview Saturday evening, he said Gorbachev had made concessions and effectively recognised the sovereignty of the republics, which he had refused to do for the past year.

"If this had been recognised a year ago there would not be such a major crisis today," he said.

"We agreed that the new union should be a union of sovereign states, freely joining together."

Yeltsin, president of the Russian Federation and Gorbachev's main political rival, had been under fire from some of his radical supporters over the April 23 agreement.

Signed by Gorbachev and the president of nine republics, the accord backed Gorbachev's crisis programme, called for an end to strikes and agreed in principle on a union treaty governing relations between the republics and Moscow.

Yeltsin faced accusations during talks with striking miners in Siberia last week that he had backed down to Gorbachev.

But on Saturday he displayed confidence over the agreement. His comments on the Kremlin leader, whose resignation he demanded on Feb. 19, verged on the scornful.

"The president was criticised quite sharply by almost every republican leader," he said.

"We said straight out: 'It's your last chance. If you carry out our agreement, then we can act, but if you are not going to, then we will go our own way. We too have our own alternative in reserve.'"

Yeltsin said Gorbachev had agreed to the holding of direct presidential elections within six months of a new union treaty being signed, assuming this was provided for in a planned new constitution.

The Soviet leader, running far behind the populist Yeltsin in opinion polls, was elected to his post by the Congress of People's Deputies.

Yeltsin said Gorbachev had reviewed a lot of his positions in the past two months.

Inkatha threatens to send 100,000 men into Soweto

BEKKERSDAL, South Africa (R) — The Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party said Sunday it would deploy 100,000 fighters in Soweto township unless Nelson Mandela's men ended political violence there.

An Inkatha official said Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) had seven days to stop faction fighting or "Inkatha is going to field or deploy 100,000 men in Soweto."

"You won't identify them. They won't wear any uniform. But they are going to look around. If they find a gangster hijacking a car that gangster will be down," Inkatha Central Committee member Musa Myeni told reporters.

About 1,500 people have been killed around Johannesburg since August in brutal fighting between Inkatha and ANC followers, much of it in the sprawling Soweto township where more than one million people live.

Police reported Sunday that 10 more people had been killed in Soweto. Two had died of gunshot wounds, four had been burned and four hacked to death.

Elsewhere in the country, one black was shot dead in Greytown, near the Natal province capital Pietermaritzburg, and three were stabbed to death in Port Shepstone, south of the port city of Durban.

The spiralling violence could scupper power-sharing talks aimed at forging a political settlement between the country's whites and its five-to-one black majority.

Mandela has set next Thursday as a deadline for President F. W. De Klerk to act decisively to end the bloodshed, threatening to boycott negotiations if his ultimatum is not met.

"This week the negotiation process between the government and the ANC could become another casualty," the widely read Sunday Star newspaper said in an editorial.

"If the ANC suspends discussions with the government, as is feared, it could deal a severe blow to a mortal blow to the negotiation process which has been South Africa's main source of hope for the past year," it added.

Myeni, speaking to reporters before a rally which Inkatha leader chief Mangosuthu Buthezi was scheduled to address, said the 100,000 Inkatha men who could be deployed would be "armed with non-traditional weapons." This left open the possibility they might carry guns.

Inkatha followers have used an assortment of weapons, ranging from traditional weapons such as spears and clubs to non-traditional arms like automatic rifles, pistols and machetes, in the nine months of fighting.

Major backs women members at elite club

LONDON (R) — Cricket-loving Prime Minister John Major, who advocates what he calls an "opportunity society," voted in favour of women joining the most exclusive men-only cricket club in Britain. In a ballot on Wednesday evening, the men of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) voted by a two-to-one margin against allowing former England women's cricket captain Rachel Heyhoe-Flint to breach their masculine bastion at the Lord's Ground in London. Major sides said the prime minister — who last month jumped a queue of 9,000 applicants to join the MCC — had voted for women to join the club. He refused to bow to demands by opposition Labour politicians to resign from the MCC over its ban on women.

"He voted in favour of letting women in. He is not leaving," an official said. "He believes in getting on the inside to work to reform the organisation from within."

Chinese official orders 3-hour body search for women

PEKING (R) — A male Chinese official ordered a body search of 40 women workers lasting more than three hours to hunt for a missing pair of trousers, the China Women's News said on Friday. After hearing that the pair of sterilised uniform pants was missing, the male deputy director of a medical equipment factory in the northeast city of Changchun first ordered a search of the women's lockers. While he and other officials looked on, official Li Deyuan then ordered two female assistants to "grope the women from top to bottom, their whole bodies," the newspaper said. When this also failed to reveal the missing pants, Li ordered the women into a changing room, where they had to strip in turn to be searched. The newspaper said the most shocking thing about the illegal body search was that none of the 40 women involved complained at the time. The case was now being investigated, the newspaper said. Li told the newspaper: "what he wanted to do with this kind of search was to find a thief. Who would have thought that by not finding a thief we then broke the regulations. 'I admit I'm ignorant about laws,' he added.

Leaders: Yugoslavia faces civil war

BELGRADE (R) — Yugoslavia's leadership said Sunday the country was on the brink of civil war after ethnic gun battles killed at least 17 people.

The state presidency authorised the army to intervene to prevent more violence.

"The political and security situation in the country... is threatening to escalate into inter-ethnic conflicts of broader proportions and has brought the country to the brink of civil war," the presidency said after an emergency meeting.

Thirteen Croatian police and three Serbs were killed last Thursday in the bloodiest clashes between Yugoslavia's two biggest nationalities since World War II. One more Serb was shot dead at a roadblock in northeastern Croatia Saturday.

Tanjug news agency said more than 200 Serbs, mainly women and children, had used rowing boats to cross to Danube River and flee Croatia into Serbia because of shootings and bomb blasts that have become an almost daily occurrence.

Belgrade Radio reported several explosions and gunfire in northeastern Croatia overnight but mentioned no casualties. Croats and Serbs armed with automatic rifles sealed off villages with roadblocks, cutting off some supplies, and tensions were high.

The presidency authorised the army to act as a buffer between Serbs and Croats, a role it has been playing for several weeks because of mounting tensions, and sent long columns of tanks and armoured vehicles roaming through Croatia.

Reuters reporters saw about 30 armoured vehicles enter Ilok and Vukovar near the border with Serbia. The army has also moved into two trouble spots — Borovo Selo and Dvor Na Uni.

"The presidency demands an immediate and unconditional halt to all activities throughout the country which could provoke new unrest and confrontations," the presidency said in a statement after several hours of crisis talks in Belgrade.

"In that respect, the Yugoslav army will prevent such activities should they occur and prevent the outbreak of new inter-ethnic confrontations."

The eight-member collective presidency, the highest state body, stopped short of declaring a state of emergency. It agreed to review the situation again on May 10.

33 die in Punjab violence

NEW DELHI (R) — At least 33 people were killed in weekend separatist violence in Punjab, while three Indian political workers died in party rivalries ahead of this month's general election, the Press Trust of India said Sunday.

The agency said 18 Sikh separatist militants, a part-time policeman and 14 civilians had been killed since Friday night in violence linked to a decade-old campaign for a Sikh homeland in Punjab, to be called Khalistan (Land of the Pure).

Police have reported some 1,900 deaths so far this year in violence in the prosperous agricultural state.

The agency said security forces killed 14 of the militants and that four died in fighting between rival separatist factions.

Three party workers were killed in political vendettas elsewhere in India, the agency said.

It said the killing Saturday in 'separate incidents in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states brought to 30 the number of deaths linked to the elections set for May 20, 23 and 26.

Political analysts fear this election could be the most violent in India since independence from Britain in 1947. None of the three main parties are certain of a clear majority of the 537 seats at stake.

300 in hospital after blast at Mexican chemical plant

MEXICO CITY (R) — More than 300 people were in hospital and 1,500 evacuated from their homes after an explosion at a Mexican insecticide plant sent toxic liquids spewing into the surrounding water system, Red Cross officials said.

Troops cordoned off homes surrounding the factory following the blast, which occurred shortly after mid-day Friday in Cordoba, a city of 210,000 inhabitants some 150 miles (240 kilometres) east of Mexico City, local Red Cross chief Jose Luis Barragan said.

"People who drank water out of the taps began to vomit," he told Reuters in a telephone interview. Others suffered severe breathing difficulties from a cloud of poisonous gases that wafted over their homes, he said.

More than 24 hours after the explosion, which was sparked by a short circuit, the water was still unsafe to drink although the plant

itself was back to normal, Barragan added.

The explosion at the government-owned Agroquimicos Nacionales de Veracruz plant comes as Mexican authorities are seeking to convince critics abroad that they are serious about tightening up on anti-pollution controls.

"In the country there are many pesticide factories functioning with the minimum of regulation and protection of the population," Homero Aridjis, a prominent Mexican ecologist, said after the Cordoba accident.

U.S. ecological groups are threatening to block a proposed free trade agreement between Mexico, the United States and Canada if Mexican environmental controls are not part of the negotiations. The Mexican government has rejected the idea, saying it is already beefing up its anti-pollution rules.

Seoul quiet after night of violence

SEOUL (R) — South Korea's protesting students took Sunday off and joined the rest of the country in Children's Day celebrations, but the calm seemed likely to be only a temporary break in a wave of angry unrest.

In central Seoul, only lingering teargas assaulting the eyes and lungs of shoppers remained of Saturday's 10 hours of violent clashes between riot police and protesters angered by the police killing a student.

Several hundred riot police were posted outside Yonsei University, a focus of the protests that began after the fatal beating of 20-year-old freshman Kang Kyung-Dae on April 26, but there were no incidents.

Dissenting organisers have threatened to stage protests every day from Monday up to the May 16 anniversary of the 1980 Kwangju massacre, when troops killed hundreds of civilians during an insurrection in the southwestern city.

Major demonstrations are scheduled Thursday to coincide with the funeral of 20-year-old student Chon Se-Yong, who died after setting himself on fire during an anti-government protest Friday.

Two other students have set themselves ablaze to protest against Kang's death. One has died and the doctors fear for the life of the other.

Speculation mounts on Delors' EC successor

BRUSSELS (R) — Frenchman Jacques Delors' term as European Commission (EC) president expires in 18 months and speculation is already rife over who might take his place.

One supposed challenger, Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, said in two interviews last week he preferred to participate in the construction of Europe from Madrid.

Another possible contender, Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, dismissed a newspaper report that he had already been picked as successor.

In March, the EC's longest serving leader, Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens, announced that he wanted to stay in Belgian politics to fight for Brussels as Europe's capital.

Delors, 65, has not yet said whether he intends to stay beyond 1992, when he completes eight years as EC head.

The former French finance minister championed the drive for a single EC currency and pushed for negotiations to set the EC's political and economic

Peru hospital workers threaten to expand strike amid cholera crisis

LIMA (AP) — Hospital workers have threatened to expand a seven-week old strike Monday, which would leave cholera wards and emergency rooms largely unattended, union officials said.

The threat has raised fears of a sharp increase in the number of Peruvians who will die from the disease. Peru is the country most affected by the epidemics, which has killed some 1,400 South Americans since January.

"The government's intransigence is forcing us to take these drastic measures," union spokesman Victor Miranda said. "We are very much aware of the consequences our actions will have."

Miranda said the union plans to leave only one nurse and one

medical technician on duty in most emergency rooms in government hospitals. He said all health workers in cholera wards will be asked to heed the strike.

Doctors are not members of the union and have not joined the strike.

Health Minister Victor Yamamoto has said he will man the hospitals with workers from police and military clinics.

But the head of the ministry's cholera task force, Eduardo Salazar, Saturday said the strike will have dramatic effects.

"Many more people will surely die," Salazar said. "Cholera is an easily treatable disease, but everyone knows that a sick person must be cared for very

rapidly."

Cholera is a bacteria passed on mainly in water or food contaminated by the feces of the disease's victims. It causes vomiting and diarrhoea so severe that a victim can die of dehydration within four hours if not treated.

The strikers are demanding their wages be raised from an average of \$60 a month to \$380 a month. Most economists say a salary of \$60 a month places the average family well below the poverty line.

The buying power of government workers has fallen by more than 75 per cent in the past year, due mainly to severe austerity measures aimed at stabilising Peru's economy.

Mutant rabbits confound Scottish bounty hunters

LONDON (R) — Mutant rabbits on islands in northern Scotland are confounding bounty hunters paid by the tail, a London newspaper reported Saturday. Hunter Harold Sutherland told the Times he had encountered a tail-less strain of rabbit that cheated him of 25 pence (43 cents) offered per tail by Shetland Island Council in an effort to curb a growing rabbit population. "I found that five or six rabbits I had shot had no tail at all," he said. "Without a tail I am not sure what we will do." An Edinburgh veterinarian said there was no reason why tail-less rabbits should not exist.

Blood of Naples patron saint fails to turn liquid

NAPLES, Italy (R) — The blood of Naples' patron saint failed to turn liquid, an event seen by superstitious locals as a disastrous omen for their city. The dried blood of fourth century Saint Januarius, kept in a phial on a gold and gem-studded pedestal in Naples Cathedral, usually turns liquid after a few prayers from the faithful in a three-yearly "miracle" hailed as a presage of good fortune for the city. But the murky substance stayed solid despite an hour and 20 minutes of prayers led by Cardinal Michele Giordano, archbishop of Naples. "This is a warning. It shows the faithful have to confess themselves, it's a warning that everybody should pray," Giordano said. Prayers will start again. Catastrophes have followed several of the occasions when the blood failed to liquefy — plague in the city in 1527, famine in 1596, cholera in 1835, and an earthquake in the Naples region in 1980. The phenomenon has never been scientifically explained. Theories have attributed it to the collective willpower of believers, volcanic activity at nearby Mount Vesuvius, exposure of the blood to light, or fraud.